

Christians, Muslims share same beliefs — Vatican

VATICAN CITY (R) — The Vatican, in a message to mark the Islamic holy fasting month of Ramadan, said on Friday that Muslims and Christians shared common beliefs which could be used as a basis to foster greater understanding. "I write this message, conscious of the fact that Christians and Muslims have not always loved and respected one another as God asks," Cardinal Francis Arinze, head of the Vatican's Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, said in the message. "Unfortunately, this lack of reciprocal love exists not just in history but also in the present," he said. Arinze, whose native Nigeria has a large Muslim community, said Christianity and Islam held similar beliefs about the treatment of fellow human beings which could provide a basis for greater understanding.

Jordan Times

AMMAN: Political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جورديان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، عمان

Lebanese man killed in rocket attack

MARJAYOUN, Lebanon (AP) — A Lebanese man was killed and two others were injured Friday when Hizbollah fired rockets and mortars along the Israeli border, a day after Israel demolished 14 houses in southern Lebanon, security officials said. Some of the mortar shells landed in Western Galilee in Israel, an Israeli army spokesman said. They caused no injuries or damage. In a related development, Israeli-allied militiamen expelled 25 people Thursday from a south Lebanon village where a militia officer was shot dead two weeks ago, Lebanese security officials said. The inhabitants of Chebaa, about 15 kilometres east of Marjayoun, were expelled to outside Israel's occupied zone in south Lebanon. The expulsions followed the razing Thursday of 14 homes in another Lebanese village and appeared to be a bid to punish the local population for guerrilla attacks.

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Egypt, Syria leaders favour Arab summit

DAMASCUS (R) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Syrian President Hafez Al Assad concluded talks in Damascus on Friday by agreeing to back the holding of an Arab summit, which would be expected to focus on the issue of Iraq. Syria and Egypt support an Arab summit to unify Arab ranks, Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al Sharaa told Reuters at the end of the talks. He said the issue of an Arab summit would top the agenda of an Arab foreign ministers' meeting due to be held in Cairo on Jan. 24 under his chairmanship. The Syrian-Egyptian decision is key to the holding of a summit, expected to discuss Iraq's future ties with Arab countries.

Arafat, Peres didn't discuss statehood

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — A senior PLO official on Friday denied President Yasser Arafat had agreed to postpone a declaration of Palestinian statehood if stalled peace moves with Israel were renewed. Former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres quoted Arafat after a meeting in the West Bank town of Bethlehem on Thursday as saying he would not take "unilateral steps" if peace negotiations were back on track. "I asked Arafat, 'If we renew the peace negotiations, then there won't be any need for unilateral declarations on May 4?' He said: 'Yes, if the negotiations are renewed, there will be no room for unilateral steps.'"

Italy, Turkey set for new diplomatic row

ROME (AFP) — Italy was heading Friday for a new diplomatic row with Turkey, as a lawyer warned that three more Kurdish rebels look set to give themselves up in Rome. "Three other PKK terrorists are on the point of joining their leader Abdullah Ocalan in Rome," said Augusto Sinagra, an Italian lawyer who acts for Turkey in the Ocalan affair. He named them as Cemil Bayik, leader of the military wing of the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK), Duran Kalkan, one of Bayik's deputies, and Ali Sapan, of the group's political wing.

Ecevit gets down to business

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey's prime minister-designate Bulent Ecevit got down to the business of forming a government Friday, a day after President Suleyman Demirel gave him a fresh mandate to break the political deadlock in Ankara. In a sign the six-week crisis might be nearing an end, parliament scheduled a vote of confidence on Ecevit's cabinet for Jan. 17. Ecevit announced he would present his cabinet list to the president next Monday, instead of Friday as originally promised. The cabinet list then goes to parliament on Tuesday and is to be debated there next Friday, before the vote of confidence on Sunday.

U.N. approves Saudi visit to Libya

UNITED NATIONS (R) — The United Nations announced on Friday that Saudi Arabian and South African envoys will spend two days in Libya next week in another attempt to persuade Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi to surrender suspects in the 1988 of a Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland. U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard said the envoys, Saudi Prince Bandar Ben Sultan, his country's ambassador to Washington, and James Gerwel, South African President Nelson Mandela's chief of staff, would leave for Libya on Tuesday.

Emotions mark first encounter between King, Prince in 6 months

Regent: His Majesty is well, expected back after 'Eid

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein is in very good health and is expected to return home after 'Eid Al Fitr holidays, HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, said early Saturday after arriving from a visit to London where he met the King. It was an emotional encounter Friday between King Hussein and Prince Hassan. It was the first time the two brothers met since mid-July when the King left for the United States for medical treatment.

"For me to have this opportunity, as a brother, to see my brother for the first time in six months was, I think, our eyes dewed ... I was really delighted," said a tearful Prince Hassan in describing his first meeting with the King.

The two brothers celebrated the King's recovery with an iftar feast, Jordan Television reported.

His Majesty and the Crown Prince spent about two hours together before iftar. At the fast-breaking meal, they were joined by Her Majesty Queen Noor, Prince Abdullah and Prince Rashid.

"We spent a delightful day together," said Prince Hassan.

The Crown Prince intended it to be a surprise visit, but the King foiled the Prince's plan.

As soon as he knew of the visit and in a sign of his improving health, the King flew his helicopter to welcome his brother from his residence in London to the airport.

"We were surprised that he was waiting for us at the airport, and we spent the whole day together," the Crown Prince told reporters at the airport after arriving in Amman.

"Officially, we always reassure everyone that His Majesty is well on the way



His Majesty King Hussein embraces HRH Crown Prince Hassan as they pose at the King's London residence on Friday (Reuters photo)

to recovery; it was all true," said Prince Hassan, adding that the King will spend the 'Eid Al Fitr, the feast marking the end of the month of Ramadan, in London. The 'Eid is expected to start Jan. 18. The Prince said: "I also would like to

Butler meets U.S. envoy on spy claims

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Chief U.N. weapons inspector Richard Butler met U.S. envoy Peter Burleigh on Friday in what arms officials say is a request for explanations about Washington's reported efforts to use his inspectors for their own foreign policy.

No word of the meeting was released but Butler was reported to be concerned that the United States was using eavesdropping equipment provided to his inspectors to further U.S. policy, which include overthrowing Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Burleigh, who has ambassadorial rank, is the chief American representative at the United Nations. News reports, which U.S. officials have privately acknowledged, say Washington, under cover of the United Nations, installed eavesdropping devices in March that allowed them to hear communications used by Iraqi military and intelligence officers who protect Saddam.

Butler's U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM), in charge of dismantling Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, is supposed to be independent and not aid political goals of any nation.

The reports, which dovetail with Iraqi charges that UNSCOM is a nest of U.S. and British spies, dim any chances that the U.N. inspection system in Iraq will survive.

"We have never conducted spying for anybody. Have we facilitated spying? Are we spies? Absolutely not," he told reporters earlier in the week. "Don't believe everything you read in print. There is much in those articles which is

wrong." Secretary-General Kofi Annan, meanwhile, is under fire from American officials for one story in which anonymous U.N. officials were quoted as saying he had credible evidence of spying activities and was upset about them. Since Wednesday U.N. officials have vigorously denied it, with his spokesman Fred Eckhard saying he had no evidence of such activities and had not authorised anyone close to him to speak in his name.

But other diplomats believe Annan wanted to make sure the United Nations divorced itself from any attempt to overthrow Saddam.

One close adviser, John Ruggie, contends Annan's position on Iraq has been misinterpreted. "He has no illusions about the regime in Iraq any more than anyone else does," he told Reuters.

But Eckhard said, "If these allegations are true, it would be damaging to the United Nations disarmament efforts worldwide."

UNSCOM has not been in Iraq since the bombing raids by the United States and Britain last month and Baghdad has vowed not to let the inspectors return.

Scott Ritter, a former UNSCOM inspector, revealed spying techniques by the United States on behalf of the commission months ago and said Washington stopped sharing information with the inspectors. The latest reports say the eavesdropping had been used more for American foreign policy purposes than for UNSCOM.

Iraq ignores latest U.S. missile attack

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq on Friday ignored a U.S. air strike on a mobile missile launcher in a northern "no-fly" zone, the latest in a string of incidents in exclusion zones that cover almost 60 per cent of Iraqi airspace.

Unlike the previous incidents, Iraq's military command and its official media did not report Thursday's clash.

A U.S. F-16 fighter fired a radar-seeking missile at a mobile Iraq surface-to-air missile launcher after being illuminated by radar in the no-fly zone Northwest of the city of Mosul, U.S. officials said.

Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon said the Roland surface-to-air missile system was believed to have been hit because its radar stopped at the projected instant of impact of the high speed anti-radiation (HARM) missile.

The action follows a rash of incursions into the no-fly zones by Iraqi fighters following "Desert Fox" the air

assault on Iraq by U.S. and British forces from Jan. 16-20.

Two Iraqi MiG-21 fighters crossed into the southern no-fly zone on Thursday, raising to 38 the number of violations since Desert Fox, said a spokesman for the U.S. Central Command in Tampa, Florida.

On Tuesday, two aerial clashes occurred between U.S. and Iraqi fighters, the first in six years, and last week saw surface-to-air missile launches at U.S. and British fighters.

Baghdad said four soldiers were killed and seven wounded in a U.S. attack on its air defences, and that a farmer died in another U.S. strike last week.

The no-fly zones, imposed after the 1991 Gulf war to protect Iraq's Kurdish and Shiite minorities, extend north of the 36th Parallel and up to the 33rd Parallel in the south, reaching the outskirts of Baghdad.

The details of the plan were included in an official summons delivered to the White House immediately after the vote by Senate Sergeant-at-Arms James Ziglar.

A week-long flurry of private meetings had failed to produce a consensus about witnesses, but senators said the joint caucus broke the stalemate as they realised it was in their mutual interest to start the process on a conciliatory note.

"There was an overwhelming desire on the part of both parties to make sure that we did not conduct ourselves in a way that disgraced the Senate," said Sen. Robert Bennett, a Utah Republican.

Clinton is accused of perjury and obstruction of justice stemming from his effort to cover up a sexual relationship with Monica Lewinsky, a former White House intern. A two-thirds vote of senators would be required to convict Clinton and remove him from office, which at this

House to begin debating fiscal budget aimed at tackling Kingdom's twin ills

By Ghadeer Taher

AMMAN — Unless the government can pull a rabbit out of its hat, it is unlikely that it will be able to tackle the country's twin ills of poverty and unemployment while keeping a lid on public expenditure.

Lawmakers, armed with a report from the influential Finance Committee of the House, today will begin debating the government's proposed JD2,160 million budget for 1999 with an estimated deficit of seven per cent.

The deficit figure is in line with the target imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as one of the conditions for renewing its 10-year reform programme, which ends in February.

Jordan and the IMF are expected to sign an agreement this month on a new three-year reform programme following the Kingdom's failure to achieve sustainable economic growth as dismal gross domestic product (GDP) figures for the last three years testify.

The budget, unveiled last month to the Lower House of Parliament by Finance Minister Michel Maro, estimated current expenditure to be JD 1,683 million, of which JD 950 million will be allocated as salaries and pensions to the military and civil servants and JD 307 million as interest on local and foreign loans.

But capital expenditure, the steam needed to drive economic recovery, will amount to a low JD 477 million.

While the minister said the projected 1999 budget would help spur sluggish growth attributable to regional instability and poor economic performance, in the same breath he stressed that tight fiscal restraint was critical if Jordan was to avoid future budget deficits that would be difficult to finance and would worsen the government's debt burden.

The government has acknowledged that it is caught between its desire to cut the deficit by at least two percentage points annually and fears of pushing the sluggish economy even further into recession.

"You can't have a contractionary fiscal policy and get out of an economic rut," said an economic analyst. "The way to reduce the deficit is to cut current expenditure, which means cutting jobs. It is myopic to scale back infrastructure projects." But reducing the country's bloated bureaucracy, analysts admit, is a political minefield very few would risk entering into.

The budget debate comes against the backdrop of continuing regional instability with turmoil in Iraq, the call for early elections in Israel and the decline in oil prices, which could mean less remittances as Jordanians are forced to accept lower salaries or come back home from the Gulf states and a possible decline in exports to these countries.

"There is a government effort, but it is not enough to reduce the impact of poverty and unemployment," said Chairman of the Finance and Economic Committee at the Lower House of Parliament Ali Abul Ragheb.

(Continued on page 12)

Koumura arrives today

Japan to extend \$63m soft loan for a tourism development project

By Francesca Ciriaci with agencies

AMMAN — Japan will extend a \$63 million soft loan to Jordan for a tourism development project expected to increase foreign currency earnings, create jobs, and stimulate domestic and regional economies, according to an embassy statement issued on Thursday.

An exchange of notes for the extension of the soft loan is scheduled to be signed by Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Koumura, expected here today on a two-day official visit, and Planning Minister Nabil Ammar.

Jordan is the largest recipient of Japan's official development assistance loans per capita among developing countries worldwide.

In addition to the upcoming extension of the soft loan in the field of tourism, the embassy statement said, Tokyo's contributions to the Kingdom's economic development totalled \$82 million in 1998.

This figure includes \$63 million for a project to double the capacity of the Zai

Water Treatment Plant, which was at the centre of a two-month crisis that left most of Western Amman homes without water last summer.

Last month, Japan dispatched a mission for the construction project of the King Hussein Bridge, linking Jordan and the Palestinian self-rule areas. "In order to study the possibility and conditions for implementing the project, which can be regarded as a concrete step as well as a symbol of peace in the region," the Japanese embassy press release said.

During his stay, Koumura is scheduled to hold talks with HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh, Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib, and the government's economic team.

Discussions will focus on the latest developments in the Middle East peace process, following Israel's decision to freeze the implementation of last October's Wye River deal with the Palestinians, and bilateral relations, as well as Jordan's economic situation and needs.

Japan's support for Jordan, which covers political, cultural, commercial, economic, scientific and technological spheres, aims to bolster the Kingdom's role in the peace process, Japanese officials say.

Koumura's Amman talks come as part of a week-long trip to the region that started on Wednesday in Egypt and includes Lebanon, Syria, Israel and the Palestinian self-ruled areas.

Upon departure from Tokyo last week, Koumura was quoted as saying that Japan intended to use its economic and political weight to strongly appeal to Israel and the Palestinians to stick to the terms agreed upon in Wye.

"We have already contributed \$400 million in aid to the Palestinians and over the next two years we will be able to offer another \$200 million," Koumura said last week.

"Apart from Japan, I believe only the U.S. or the European Union nations together would be able to do something like that."

(Continued on page 12)

U.S. Senate approves bipartisan plan for Clinton's trial

WASHINGTON (R) — The Senate averted a possible showdown on Friday, approving a bipartisan plan for conducting President Bill Clinton's impeachment trial that could allow witnesses and would start presentations of evidence next week.

On a unanimous vote, all 100 senators approved a road map for the trial that would postpone decisions on calling witnesses until late January and require a majority Senate vote to approve them.

The dispute over witnesses had sharply divided the Senate, as Democrats warned the live testimony requested by House of Representatives Republicans could spark a prolonged and bitter trial. "I think today we have

acted in the very best tradition of the Senate, and it is an appropriate approach for this historic, very solemn event," Senate Republican Leader Trent Lott said.

The agreement followed a rare two-hour informal closed session of senators from both parties in the Old Senate Chamber, down a Capitol hallway from where arguments will begin on Thursday in the first presidential impeachment trial in more than 130 years.

The details of the plan were included in an official summons delivered to the White House immediately after the vote by Senate Sergeant-at-Arms James Ziglar.

A week-long flurry of private meetings had failed to

produce a consensus about witnesses, but senators said the joint caucus broke the stalemate as they realised it was in their mutual interest to start the process on a conciliatory note.

"There was an overwhelming desire on the part of both parties to make sure that we did not conduct ourselves in a way that disgraced the Senate," said Sen. Robert Bennett, a Utah Republican.

Clinton is accused of perjury and obstruction of justice stemming from his effort to cover up a sexual relationship with Monica Lewinsky, a former White House intern.

A two-thirds vote of senators would be required to convict Clinton and remove him from office, which at this

point is considered unlikely. Under the accord, the House — which has appointed 13 Republican members to lead the prosecution — and the White House each would get 24 hours of floor time, about three days, to present their cases.

Senators would get 16 hours for questions. When those are concluded, motions to dismiss the case and to call witnesses could be made. They would require a majority vote.

The House would have to recommend a list of witnesses and have three hours to argue why they should be called.

If the motion to dismiss failed and the list of witnesses was approved, the trial would recess while the witnesses

were deposited by each side. A second majority vote would be required after the depositions to determine if the witnesses would actually be called to testify. Each side would get eight hours for closing arguments, and each article of impeachment would be voted on at the conclusion.

While the accord does not solve all the problems for Democrats, "it gives us the possibility of having a short trial," said Democratic Sen. Patrick Leahy of Vermont.

Among the witnesses House managers have said they might call are key players in the drama such as Lewinsky and Clinton secretary Betty Currie.

(Continued on page 12)

Iranian leader orders further probe into dissidents' murders

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Friday he had ordered a further investigation into the murders of intellectuals and political dissidents, saying the "scenario" may have its roots abroad.

"This matter is not finished. I have difficulty believing that these murders have taken place without a foreign scenario," Khamenei said in a sermon ahead of the weekly Muslim prayers at Tehran University.

His remarks followed the extraordinary admission this week by the country's intelligence ministry that rogue agents were involved in the stabbing to death of opposition nationalist leader Daryush Foruhar and his wife, Parvaneh, on Nov. 22.

"I'm-minded, irresponsible colleagues" also carried out the kidnapping and murder of at least two secular writers — Mohammad Mokhtari and Mohammad Pouyandeh — in early December, it said.

Another writer, Majid Sharif, was found dead in mysterious circumstances around the same time but the authorities said he had died of a heart attack.

The state news agency IRNA also mentioned, for the first time, the name of Piruz Davani, a writer-translator who went missing several months ago, saying that "according to unofficial

reports" he was among those killed.

"These killings are to the detriment of the nation and the regime," Khamenei said. "Regardless of how dogmatic a domestic group may be, it is impossible for those higher up who are capable of analysing things to commit such murders."

"The late Foruhar and his wife were not a threat to us. He was our friend before the [1979 Islamic] revolution, a colleague in the first years of the revolution and an adversary after that," he said.

"But they were decent people and harmless adversaries with no link to outside enemies. Once in a while they issued a statement against the government, but few were under their influence."

"Anyone who kills the likes of Foruhar cannot be a friend of the regime," Iran's spiritual guide said. "I refuse to believe that this is not a move against the regime."

Foruhar, who had a long record of struggle against the shah's regime, was the labour minister in the interim government which came to power after the revolution.

The transitional government, made up of liberal nationalist politicians, collapsed after eight months under pressure from Shiite Muslim clergy and Foruhar had since turned into a dissident.

Author seeks stay in Norway for security

OSLO (R) — An Iranian author, two of whose colleagues were among a number of dissidents recently killed in Iran, is seeking to stay in Norway, a Norwegian group for freedom of expression said on Friday.

Mansour Koushan, fearing his life could be at risk if he goes back to Tehran, "will apply for permanent residence in Norway," said Carl Morten Iversen, head of the Norwegian Forum for Freedom of Expression.

Koushan has been in Norway since attending a seminar in Oslo last month on a tourist visa. He was likely to seek permanent residence on humanitarian grounds, short of political asylum.

Koushan was one of six writers who last year tried to revive an independent association of Iranian writers, which had been dominated by liberal and left-leaning authors critical of the government.

Two of the six were killed in a recent spate of killings of dissidents. Iran's intelligence ministry announced on Wednesday that it had arrested a number of Iranian secret police agents on suspicion of involvement in the killings.

Koushan's wife and two children are still in Iran and he hopes that a permit to stay in Norway would enable them to join him, Iversen said.

The Iranian leader said the two writers confirmed murdered also did not pose a threat to the regime because they were "unknown."

"I had never heard their names, although I am not one unfamiliar with intellectual currents in the country. I read all the literary and culture publications and know all the writers and intellectuals here," said Khamenei, a scholar steeped in Persian and Islamic literature.

"They were not among the first grade intellectuals in this country. Few people knew them and they did not command much publicity," he added.

He raised the possibility of "foreigners" involved in "plotting out a premeditated scenario" and called for a further probe.

"I have ordered the intelligence ministry and emphasised to the president to find the source of the clue," he said. "It could be that intelligence agents were deceived. We cannot let it go by easily."



FLAMINGOS ON SALE IN IRAQ: An Iraqi man Friday displays two stuffed flamingos at the Al Gazil market in Baghdad. The flamingos are sold for the equivalent of approximately \$1.66 as decorations in Iraqi houses (Reuters photo)

Humanitarian group plans relief shipment for Iraqi children

By Hind-Lara Mango

AMMAN — The "Help Iraq" project, organised by Family International will take truckloads of much needed food, clothes, and medicine to the children of Iraq on Sunday.

The campaign started this month and has appealed to the Jordanian community at large to bring a little joy to the hearts of Iraqi children, said Family International organisers.

"On seeing the miserable living conditions of the Iraqi children in orphanages, hospitals and impoverished schools, we strongly felt that we should do something," said Florence Bjerregaard, a member of Family International.

It is estimated that over half a million Iraqi children have died as a result of the eight-year-old U.N. sanctions imposed on Iraq.

According to Denis Halliday, former U.N. assistant secretary general, some 6,000 Iraqi infants are dying every month.

Even under the "oil-for-food" deal, hospitals report that they

do not have necessary equipment and medicine. The deal allows Baghdad to sell \$5.2 billion worth of oil every six months to buy much-needed food and medicine and to receive spare parts for its battered oil industry.

Iraq, however, has only been able to export \$3 billion worth of crude in the fifth six-month phase of the deal.

"We hope to bring these children some joy with toys, books, clothes, educational materials, food, and medicine," said Suad Abeidi, an educator with Family International.

Abeidi told the Jordan Times that since the beginning of the month, people in Jordan have been responding to calls to help alleviate a small part of the suffering of the Iraqi children.

"Every day we get calls from people who want to help in any way," Abeidi said, adding that all in-kind contributions had been sent to the Haya Centre for Culture and Arts to be transported to Iraq.

"We're hoping to be in Iraq in time for 'Eid Al Fitr. On previ-

ous trips, we distributed everything right into the hands of these children. The need there is tremendous; although I guess we can only play a small part in bringing joy and happiness to them," said David Paul, another Family International member.

The organisation consists of five families from all over the world. For the past five years, they have volunteered for community service projects and provided educational programmes through culture and entertainment.

"We have worked with children in different refugee camps using early learning approaches," Bjerregaard told the Jordan Times. She added that the organisation had also visited needy families and distributed food packages in cooperation with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

Last year, the organisation commenced motivational educational programmes for children at the various institutions Family International visited.

Hospital staff on strike over salary dispute

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — The staff of the private Al Sharq Hospital has started an open-ended strike and refused to accept patients unless the management pays salaries now three months overdue, a hospital official said Friday.

The hospital's staff of 60, including doctors, nurses, lab technicians and others, has refused to admit new patients to the 40-bed hospital and will only treat emergency cases, said Sana' Hater, a nurse.

The troubles began earlier last year when the hospital's former management started facing financial problems, which resulted in the sale of the hospital to another company, said Ala' Mohammad, another nurse. The two managements, however, could not agree on several financial points, which delayed the registration of the contract at the Amman Chamber of Industry, which in turn delayed the payment of the salaries.

"We decided to hold an open-ended strike until the hospital gives us our salaries," said Mohammad.

"They [the management] called the police to threaten us and force us to rescind our decision, but when the police found it to be a peaceful strike, they left us alone," he added.

Mohammad and other hospital staff said they will continue their strike until they are paid.

"The hospital's management has placed an official document on the hospital's bulletin board announcing that the long overdue salaries would be paid on Jan. 7," said Mohammad. "But when the staff went to collect the money, they were told there was still some delay and that the salaries would be paid next week," added Mohammad, who said he is planning to resign from the hospital after he obtains his money.

"They are playing with us, they keep telling us today and tomorrow, but tomorrow never comes."

"We have families to support. The 'Eid is coming and it entails many expenses," he complained.

Shafiq Bakri, the former manager of the hospital, declined to comment on the issue, and Bassem Kasir, the current hospital director, was unavailable for comment.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Greece reaffirms commitment to Cyprus

ATHENS (AFP) — Greece stressed Friday that it remains committed to Cyprus' defence while the Greek press reported that Athens would pay for shorter-range Russian missiles to replace the S-300s that Nicosia was obliged to give up. "Greek-Cypriot cooperation on defence matters is continuous and substantial," government spokesman Dimitris Reppas said. "Greece is with Cyprus, not just in theory, but in practice," he said but refused to comment on the reports that Greece would foot the bill for Russian Tor-M1 or S-15 missiles for Cyprus.

Lebanese PM denounces civilians' expulsion

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanese Prime Minister Salim Hoss Friday described as a "criminal act" Israel's expulsion of civilians from a village in the zone it occupies in southern Lebanon. He said his government would "do everything possible and make the necessary contacts to enforce the return of those expelled to their village." Twenty-four members of one family were expelled Thursday night from the Sunni Muslim village of Shebaa when two of their brothers were arrested on charges of killing an official of Israel's proxy South Lebanon Army militia.

'Iraqi division commander executed'

WASHINGTON (AFP) — An Iraqi army division commander and other officers have been executed in a sign that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and his regime have been shaken internally by U.S.-British bombings, a top U.S. general said. General Anthony Zinni, commander of U.S. forces in the Gulf, said the executions in southern Iraq may have resulted from failure to obey the orders of Saddam Hussein's newly named chief in the south, General Ali Hassan Majid. "We are seeing a number of things internally that I think demonstrate that he was shaken and the regime was shaken," Zinni said at a Pentagon briefing. "We have seen executions in the south," he said. "One division in particular, lost its commander and several others."

Egypt denies Abu Nidal was in Cairo

CAIRO (R) — Egyptian officials denied a British press report on Friday that a wanted Palestinian guerrilla chief had been in Egypt and fled from there to Iraq in mid-December.

"Foreign Minister Amr Musa has repeatedly denied such reports," said a foreign ministry official who wished to remain unnamed. "He said it a million times. I am not aware of anything new on this matter."

An interior ministry official also said his department knew nothing about the case. "We know nothing about Abu Nidal or about this article," he said.

The Guardian newspaper reported that Abu Nidal, a Palestinian guerrilla leader linked to a global campaign of bombings and assassinations, had fled from Egypt to Iraq out of fear that he might be handed over to Western governments.

Quoting "normally reliable diplomatic sources," the newspaper said the

Palestinian had moved to Baghdad from a Cairo hospital where he had been undergoing treatment for leukaemia.

Egypt has consistently denied reports that Abu Nidal was in the country. His group is blamed for killing or wounding some 900 people in at least 20 countries, including the wounding in 1982 of Israel's ambassador in London Shlomo Argov.

Western countries have accused Abu Nidal, now 61, of masterminding gun and grenade attacks on Israeli airline check-in desks at Rome and Vienna airports in December 1985 in which 19 people died and more than 100 were wounded.

Abu Nidal, whose real name is Sabri Al Banna, heads the Fateh Revolutionary Council, one of 12 groups which had its assets frozen by U.S. President Bill Clinton in 1995 for waging campaigns to undermine the Middle East peace process.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:10 Animaniacs
15:30 The Adventures of the Bush Patrol
16:00 Drama - Neighbours
16:30 (Ch.2 links with Ch.1)
17:00 French programme - *Faut Pas Rêver*
18:15 Doc. - Omar Ben Abdul Aziz
19:00 New in French
19:15 Words of Wisdom
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy - Murphy Brown
20:00 Islam in a Changing World
20:30 Drama - The Pretender
21:10 An ABC Democracy
21:20 Boston Pops Orchestra
22:00 News in English
22:30 Feature film - "Miracle Child"
22:59 Twisted
01:00 End of T.V.

PRAYER TIMES

04:56 Fajr
05:11 (Sunrise) Duha
11:43 Dhuhr
14:30 'Asr
16:53 Maghreb
18:15 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweilieh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4634590

Terra Sancta Church Tel.

4622366

Anglican Church Tel.

4634853/4624811

St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel.

4771751

Amman International Church Tel.

5865897

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel.

5688404

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel.

5811295

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel.

4654932

St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel.

5661757

Church of the Annunciation Tel.

4637440

Greek Orthodox Church Tel.

4646138

Church of Presentation, Sweilieh Tel.

5920146

The Uniate Catholic Church Tel.

4624757

The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel.

4614190

Evangelical Free Church Tel.

4892679

The Baptist Church Tel.

4628052

The Armenian Catholic Church Tel.

4771331

The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel.

4775261

Relative cold weather conditions will prevail with skies partly cloudy. Scattered showers are expected in various regions and winds westerly to northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Min/Max. temp.

Amman 05/13

Aqaba 10/20

Deserts 02/15

Jordan Valley 11/21

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 14 Aqaba 19. Humidity readings: Amman 39 per cent.

Aqaba 37 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun 02/07

Jerash 07/14

Um Qays 05/13

Madaba 04/13

Petra 02/13

Dead Sea 11/21

USEFUL TELEPHONE NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Fadl Al Khateb 5865456

Dr. Yousef Faqih 4390104

Dr. Mukhlis Halseh 5519230

Dr. Muhammad Lababdeh 5167914

AMMAN:

Firas Pharmacy 5661912

Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730

Mayadab Pharmacy 5537004

Rukn Al Dawa Pharmacy 5556169

IRBID:

Dr. Ali Shuqairi 02/710069

Fou'ad Pharmacy 02/275360

ZARQA:

Dr. Issa Al Omari 09/801266

Palestine Pharmacy 09/983562

Fou'ad Pharmacy 02/275360

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111

Civil Defence Department 5661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777

Fire Brigade 4617101

Blood Bank 4775121

Highway Police 5343402

Traffic Police 4896390

Public Security Dept. 4630321

Hotel Complaints 5605800

Price Complaints 5661176

Water & Sewerage Complaints 4897467

Amman Municipality Complaints 787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls

Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101

Jordan Television 4773111

Radio Jordan 4774111

Water Authority 5680100

J. Electricity Authority 5815615

Electric Power Co. 4636381

RJ Flight Information 44-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199

The Islamic, Abdali 5666131/7

Hussein Medical Centre 5856856

Luzmila 4630195

Khalidi Maternity 4644281/6

Aklich Maternity 4642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362

Malhas J. Amman 4636101

Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071

Shmeisani Hospital 5607431

Jordan Hospital 5607550

University Hospital 5353444

Al-Mushar Hospital 5667227/9

Al-Ahli, Abdali 5661646/6

Italian, Al-Muhajreen 4777101/3

Al-Bashir 4775111/26

Army, Marka 4891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital 5157100

Amal Hospital 5607155

Al Amal Cancer Centre 5353000

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital

09/983323

Zarqa National Hospital

09/900560

Ibn Sina Hospital 09/986731

Al Hikma Modern Hospital 09/990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital 02/275555

Roman Catholic Hospital 02/272275

Ibn Al Nafees Hospital 02/7101372, 02/7

Missing woman's body found in well

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — Police are investigating the death of a 28-year-old woman whose body was found in a water well at an olive press in Ramtha on Wednesday, official sources said.

The woman, identified as W.M. and a mother of a six-year-old child, had been reported missing by her husband four days ago, one source said.

The woman was found by workers at the press, who informed the authorities, the source added.

The source described the well as being deep and wide, but with a narrow opening.

Officials ruled out the possibility that the woman may have been murdered and said preliminary investigations indicate that she might have accidentally fell into the well.

Another source told the Jordan Times that the "woman had suffered from mental problems."

"We were told by the victim's husband, who works as a guard at the olive press, that his wife was mentally ill," the source said.

It took the Civil Defence Department two hours to pull the woman's decomposing body from the well.

The body was taken to the National Institute for Forensic Medicine for an autopsy to determine the cause of death.



KING RECEIVES VISIT FROM CROWN PRINCE: His Majesty King Hussein on Friday sits behind the wheel of a car as he poses with His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, at the King's London residence. King Hussein was paid a brief visit by the Crown Prince (Reuters photo)

'Awqaf Ministry to enforce directives concerning politics, mosques'

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs is determined to carry out government orders to prevent the abuse of mosque pulpits to promote ideological objectives of political parties, according to Awqaf Minister Abdul Salam Abbadi.

In a dialogue with deputies, senators and other politicians organised by the Arwa Wihqa Society on Thursday to discuss a draft awqaf law, Abbadi said that in the draft law and

the Political Parties Law, the government has sought to keep mosques separate from political parties' activities because they are places of worship for all people.

Abbadi said the ministry does not object to mosque preachers delivering sermons on purely religious matters or the appointment of people affiliated with political groups. He noted that at least 200 ministry employees are members of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Saying that more than 1,000 mosque preachers are under-qualified and have no degrees making them eligible for the position of imam at mosques, Abbadi said the ministry has drawn up plans to qualify mosque preachers. He said the ministry has over the past three years appointed 1,800 employees who hold university and community college diplomas as part of its drive to upgrade the ministry's services.

Referring to its other services, Abbadi said the ministry builds more than 150 mosques every year and runs two centres and hospices in Amman and Maan that provide shelter and food to needy Muslims. Abbadi also announced that the ministry's 1999 fiscal budget includes a JD5 million allocation to be spent on salaries and services provided by the Awqaf department in charge of the holy sites of Jerusalem.

Israel approves doctors chosen to examine Jordanian prisoners

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — Israel on Thursday approved a list of doctors chosen by the Jordan Medical Association to examine 14 Jordanian prisoners held in Israeli jails, a senior official said Friday.

"We received on Thursday official approval from the Israeli authorities to allow the five doctors that were nominated by the JMA to examine the Jordanian prisoners who are presumed ill," Jordanian Ambassador to Israel Omar Rifai told the Jordan Times on Friday.

Last week, Israel rejected the list, which included only JMA-member doctors living in east Jerusalem.

"Israel is playing politics and trying to force the association's hand in normalisation," JMA President Bassem Dajani told the Jordan Times on Wednesday.

Rifai said the embassy informed the association's representative in east Jerusalem about the official Israeli approval.

"We've informed the head of the JMA Jerusalem centre, Dr. Hisham Arda, who will head the team that will examine the Jordanian prisoners, about the Israeli approval," the Ambassador said.

According to Rifai, the doctors should complete their mission this week.

The JMA, a stronghold of anti-normalisation with Israeli, together with the other 12 professional

unions, has threatened to expel any of its members who either visit Israel or conduct activities with the Jewish state.

Officials said the association's decision to send a team of doctors "on a purely humanitarian mission" to examine the Jordanian prisoners, many of them said to be suffering from serious psychological and health problems, posed the toughest test yet to their determination to fight normalisation.

In November, the Jordanian embassy obtained Israeli approval to send physicians to examine the prisoners.

The issue was raised after a visit on Oct. 20 by family members of 12 prisoners held in Israel. The visit was the first to be approved by the Israeli government under the 1994 Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty.

The families had said the prisoners were suffering from serious health problems and urged the government to do its utmost to secure their release.

In a statement they issued then, the families said: "All the prisoners suffer from deteriorating psychological and health conditions as a result of their prolonged and unjustified detention and poor living conditions."

Rifai said that the embassy's top priority now is the prisoners' condition and that envoys are visiting them every week.

"Our aim is to secure the

release of all Jordanian prisoners in Israel... we are making every possible effort and exerting pressure in order to win the release of all our prisoners," Rifai said. "We hope our efforts will lead to positive results soon."

The prisoners had been held in two jails in Shata and Nafha before their recent transfer to the Ashkelon prison in southern Israel upon a request by the Jordanian authorities.

In the past four years, Tel Aviv freed more than 20 Jordanian prisoners who were caught infiltrating Israel or were jailed because of alleged affiliation with banned Palestinian groups.

Israel says the remaining 14 prisoners were convicted of serious offences, such as fatal attacks on Israelis. The Jewish state insists that they spend their prison terms in Israel, while Jordan is seeking their handover to Jordanian custody.

However, informed sources said that "in addition to the 14 Jordanians imprisoned on security charges, there are six more held in Israel on criminal offences."

Israel freed most Jordanian prisoners in its jails more than one year ago in exchange for two Mossad agents who attempted to assassinate

Khaled Misha'al, a leading member of the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, in Amman in 1997.

Conservation society survey seeks to shed light on domestic water use

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature Friday said it is currently analysing the results of its recent survey on water use in order to effectively promote public awareness and find new water saving methods.

The director of the society's Environmental Public Awareness Campaign, Ahmad Rousan, said the survey, which included questions developed by international and local water experts, was carried out in 40 schools around the Kingdom. It targeted students and teachers on their household use of water.

The society and the government work together to raise public awareness, especially among students, through conservation clubs and activities and to introduce conservation subjects into school curricula.

Several months ago, Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Tawfiq Kreishan, in a statement marking International Ozone Day, urged schools to help the government in its efforts to raise public awareness on protecting the environment.

A U.S. programme, Glob-

al Learning and Observing to Benefit the Environment, is being taught at 16 Jordanian schools to help teachers and students cooperate on protecting nature.

Around \$57,000 worth of booklets, brochures and banners will be distributed to students and teachers.

Rousan added that the study would help produce a documentary film in cooperation with Jordan Television to raise awareness regarding the water situation in Jordan.

Experts say Jordanians will have to live with chronic water shortages as the government scrambles to find local and foreign financiers to fund new, non-traditional water sources. According to an official report, fresh water resources will be fully utilised by the year 2005. Hence, investment in water projects is one of the government's major goals for the 21st century to help solve the water crisis.

Official figures suggest that by the year 2000, Jordan's population, growing at around 3.5 per cent per year, will require 1,257 million cubic metres of water to cover minimum needs, while resources will be

capable of supplying only 960 million cubic metres.

According to Rousan, the survey is part of an ongoing public awareness scheme implemented in conjunction with the Ministry of Water and Irrigation and funded by the United States Agency for International Development.

He added that the project comes in accordance with regional conservation efforts, including those in Palestine, Tunisia, Morocco and Oman.

A three-day workshop involving international, regional and local organisations will be held here in February on the issue.

Responsible for protecting the Kingdom's natural resources, wildlife and wild areas, the RSCN, a non-governmental society formed in 1966, manages six nature reserves and has plans to set up another seven.

The society is a member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, the World Wide Fund for Nature and other international environmental bodies. It is also the Middle East representative of BirdLife International.

Study finds multi-system disease 'common' in Jordan

By Hind-Lara Mango

AMMAN — A study released recently has found that Behcet Disease, an incurable multi-system disorder which attacks joints, eyes and the central nervous system, is common in Jordan.

"We studied 150 cases of Behcet Disease in Jordan over four years and found that it attacks young males between 20 and 30 years of age," said Wafa Madanat, president of the Friends of Behcet Disease Patients Society.

"It runs a similar course found in Mediterranean countries, and we believe the disease is very common in Jordan," Madanat told the Jordan Times in a recent interview.

The study indicated that the mean age for Jordanians suffering from the disease is

31 and that the male/female ratio stands at three to one.

"It attacks those at their peak of economic productivity and leaves them economically and socially dependent," Madanat said.

"These patients badly need rehabilitation to adapt to their new condition. Sadly, this is not available here," she said.

Specialists say this disease can only be diagnosed after a pattern of symptoms appear, which may take several years.

The disease was officially identified in 1937 by Turkish dermatologist Hulusi Behcet, but there are records that may indicate its presence in Greece dating back to 500 B.C.

Jordanian Khalil Abdul Jufit was 15 years old when he started to develop oral ulcers and began to lose sensation in his hands. Now, at

25, he has developed full-blown Behcet Disease, and the problem has affected others in his family of 12.

For the past two years, researchers have attempted to determine whether the disease is related to hereditary factors.

The study found that 57 per cent of victims were related to others who suffered from the disease.

The Behcet Disease Study Group in Jordan has been cooperating with British and Japanese universities in researching hereditary factors relating to the disease.

"All signs indicate that there is a direct correlation between the disease and hereditary factors, especially in young patients," Madanat said.

Madanat's 100-member society is trying to secure some benefits from the state-run health system to help

those suffering from Behcet Disease.

In order to save scarce financial resources, the Behcet Disease Patients Society encourages patients to help each other by giving away medicine they no longer need.

According to the study, released in October during the Eighth International Congress on Behcet Disease in Italy, 40 per cent of patients had recurrent oral ulcers and 46 per cent suffered from eye lesions, with 20 per cent of them eventually losing their vision.

However, ophthalmologist Faisal Fayad told the Jordan Times that the effects of Behcet Disease on the eye can be controlled by drugs or surgery. "But we can't cure the disease itself," he added.

The study found that 29 per cent of victims developed thrombosis, 30 per cent

developed arthritis and 41 per cent had problems with their central nervous systems.

Madanat stressed the importance of raising awareness on the disease.

"People sometimes have oral ulcers and then forget about them once they disappear. If they do have Behcet Disease, the symptoms will eventually show after several years."

Severe cases of this disease can lead to problems in the larger blood vessels near the heart.

Doctors said treatment for Behcet Disease mainly focuses on suppressing the immune system, which becomes over-aggressive due to the affliction.

If the immune system is calmed down, then inflammation does not break out so frequently, making symptoms less severe.

Decision on lifting deputy's immunity postponed

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Legal Committee of the Lower House of Parliament has postponed until the end of Ramadan a decision on whether to lift the immunity of Deputy Ahmad Oweidi Abbadi to enable the criminal prosecutor to question him over an alleged case of sexual assault.

Mahmoud Kharabsheh,

the committee's rapporteur, was quoted Friday by the local press as saying that the committee members decided on the postponement in view of the difficulties in reaching a consensus.

The committee members were reported to have been split on whether to lift Abbadi's immunity only partially to allow the ques-

tioning but not an indictment, to lift it completely, or to delay discussion of the matter, according to the local press.

Last week, Kharabsheh was quoted as saying that the committee was likely to recommend that the House lift Abbadi's immunity so that he could be questioned in connection with charges

relating to two cases of alleged sexual assault.

For his part, Abbadi has categorically denied the charges, saying that they were fabricated by certain parties seeking revenge on him.

According to House regulations, cases concerning immunity of deputies are referred to the Legal Com-

mittee for review. The committee should issue recommendations to the House within two weeks.

The Constitution states that senators and deputies shall not be subject to prosecution while Parliament is in session unless an absolute majority of the Lower House finds sufficient evidence to allow prosecution.

what's going on

POETRY FESTIVAL

* Poetry recitation with the participation of several Arab poets at the City Hall, Greater Amman Municipality, Ras Al 'Ain at 7:30 p.m.

CONCERT

* Musical performance by Hamdi Al Sa'di of Iraq at the Royal Cultural Centre at 7:30 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Exhibition of ceramics, sculpture, and abstract (plastic) art by Jordanian, Iraqi, Syrian, Lebanese, and Sudanese artists at Hammourabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until Jan. 25.

* Exhibition of Nabataean silver jewelry at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre, off Wadi Saqra Street, until Jan. 15 (Tel. 5699141/2).

* "The Warm Winter" — works by several artists at Orfali Art Gallery, Um Uthaina (Tel. 5526932), until Feb. 1.

* The Tenth Anniversary Exhibition of Contemporary Arab Artists at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 4643251/2), until Jan. 28.

Official denies allegations of house demolitions in Palestinian refugee camps

AMMAN (J.T.) — The director of the Palestinian Affairs Department on Friday denied that infrastructure projects being implemented in the country's less-developed regions, including Palestinian refugee camps, entail the demolition of refugees' homes or their permanent settlement in Jordan.

"The projects do not entail the demolition of any Palestinian refugee's home in any of the 13 camps in Jordan. The current government-organised land survey operations are merely designed to pave the way for improving the infrastructure services in the camps," the department's director, Ibrahim Badran, said in a statement published in the local press.

Earlier, Deputy Khalil Attiyeh had charged that allocations in the fiscal budget for improving conditions in the camps were fuelling suspicions

among refugees about the ultimate objective of such plans.

"It would have been better to spend these funds on income-generating projects that could stimulate the national economy instead of carrying out these projects, which have political implications that the Palestinian refugees are being settled permanently in the Kingdom," Attiyeh said.

He said such projects will weaken the position of Jordanian negotiators with regard to the fate of the refugees in final status talks between Israel and the PNA. Attiyeh added that he was opposed to home demolitions that aim at erasing the camps' identity and nature.

In response, Badran said: "It is unreasonable that engineering operations and the construction of sewage, electricity and road networks can be

done without proper surveys."

"These projects are merely aimed at improving conditions in the refugee camps and raising the level of services for their residents," added Badran.

He said that the government was doing everything in its power to help the United Nations Relief and Works Agency meet its commitments to the refugees but that the government cannot remain passive if the agency fails to carry out the necessary works or fails to guarantee the refugees' essential services.

The state's fiscal budget for this year as submitted by Finance Minister Michael Marto to Parliament last month provides for JD32 million for infrastructure services in less-developed regions, including Palestinian refugee camps, during 1999.

Foreign minister meets with Abu Mazen on peace process

AMMAN (J.T.) — Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib held weekend talks with Palestinian number two Mahmoud Abbas at the deadlocked Middle East peace process, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

In their Thursday meeting, the two also discussed a planned three-way meeting with Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa, set to be held in Amman around Jan. 20, after the feast marking the end of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

The goal of the meeting is "to coordinate positions on the Arab-Israeli peace process and the frozen Palestinian-Israeli Wye River accord" concluded in October, Khatib said.

The Wye River Memorandum called for three Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank over three months.

The first has been carried out, but Israel balked at conducting the next two withdrawals, saying that the Palestinians had not carried out the security side of the deal.

Thousands riot in Indonesian town

KARAWANG. Indonesia (AP) — Thousands of rioters rampaged through an Indonesian town Friday, hurling stones at police stations and looting shops. Officers fired at the mobs, killing at least one person and injuring six others.

Rioters banged drums, burned a motorcycle, shouted taunts at security forces and threw sidewalk bricks at them. They smashed the windows of two Protestant churches and attacked the home of an ethnic Chinese businessman.

"This is because of the government," said one man, reflecting deep public mistrust of the state that has emerged in the past year.

But much of the violence in Karawang on the main island of Java lacked any political motive, with looters cheering and grabbing shoes, candles and umbrellas from stores. Young boys joined in the chaos.

Dozens of rioters were arrested, including one soldier dressed in civilian clothing, said police chief Col. Ahmad Hidayat. He did not speculate why the soldier was involved.

Civil unrest plagued the Southeast Asian nation of

210 million in 1998 and shows no signs of abating.

In May, deadly riots and student protests helped oust former President Suharto after 32 years of iron-handed rule, and authorities fear an escalation of violence ahead of national elections in June.

Riots broke out early Friday in Karawang, 60 kilometres east of the Indonesian capital of Jakarta, after rumours spread that police had mistreated motorcycle drivers who ferry passengers for a living.

Mobs at first broke down the door of a department store and looted goods. Hidayat, told the private Sonora radio news station.

The crowd swelled and attacked the police headquarters and other posts, forcing police to fire on their assailants. It was not known if police were using plastic bullets or live ammunition.

A 19-year-old high school student was shot and killed, said Rosid, a medic in the emergency room at the main town hospital.

Six people were wounded by gunfire and mobs beat two others.

Witnesses said looters in Karawang, which is located in a rice-growing area, did not single out shops owned by ethnic Chinese entrepreneurs. However, some rioters threw stones at a house owned by a Chinese businessman.

Much of the violence in Indonesia in 1998 and in previous years was directed at the Chinese minority, which is resented partly because of its relative wealth. Many Chinese in Indonesia are Christian or Buddhist.

The persistent riots in Indonesia have been linked to a number of causes, including economic hardship, ethnic and religious tensions and political turmoil. Also, many people are suspicious of the armed forces, which has acknowledged human rights abuses during the Suharto era.

President B.J. Habibie, Suharto's successor, is implementing political reforms but student activists say his measures fall far short of real democracy. One of their key complaints is that the military retains a prominent role in politics.

Indonesian torture victim testifies as military trial resumes

JAKARTA (AFP) — A young political activist testified at a court martial here Friday that he was abducted and repeatedly tortured with electric shock treatment in the last months of the Suharto regime.

But two other activists who had also been kidnapped and tortured refused to testify.

Speaking as a witness at the trial of 11 members of the elite special forces unit charged with abducting nine activists, Neza Patria, 28, said he was subjected to the shocks during a three-day interrogation.

"They asked me if I knew Mega, Gus Dur, Benny Murdani... every time I answered no, I was submitted to shocks," said Neza, one of nine activists the feared Kopassus special forces soldiers are accused of abducting.

He was referring to opposition politician Megawati Sukarnoputri, Muslim leader Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) and retired military intelligence chief and Suharto critic Benny Murdani.

Neza, one of three victims in the small court room packed with some 100 journalists, lawyers and observers, at first refused to testify, saying before he wanted the military to produce information on 13 missing activists.

Chief military judge Colonel Santoso told Neza he would face legal action if he failed to testify, and

added information on the 13 would be unlikely to resurface unless he did.

Santoso also rejected arguments put forward by the National Commission on Human Rights last week, which called for the court martial to be halted.

Citing a prosecution argument that the 11 had acted on their own out of concern for national security, the commission had said the trial appeared designed solely to shelter the military high command and make scapegoats out of the accused, seven of them junior officers.

The elite Kopassus forces were commanded by Prabowo Subianto, a son-in-law of former president Suharto, at the time of the abductions. Prabowo has since been dismissed from the military in connection with the kidnappings and is now in Jordan.

The chief judge asked the 11 accused, standing ramrod straight in their trademark red berets, if they would like to seek legal counsel before the court-martial resumed, but all said no.

Two other activists who had resurfaced after being detained for months, refused to testify at the court martial.

Pius Lustrilang, and Andi Arief, separately ignored the threat of legal action and told the court martial they refused to testify before the military made clear the whereabouts of 13

other missing activists.

Human rights organisations say a total of 23 activists were abducted in the last months of the rule of former president Suharto, who stepped down in May amid mass protests, but the 11 accused are charged only with the abductions of the nine who have resurfaced.

One has been found dead, and 13 others remain missing.

Reza told the court that he and fellow activist Han Rusdianto were grabbed by four men in plain clothes at night from the apartment they shared on March 13, frogmarched downstairs, blindfolded and manacled and driven to an unknown destination.

He said he was interrogated and tortured for three days, before being moved to an unknown place for one day, then spent three months incarcerated in Jakarta's police headquarters before being released.

Asked to identify any of the defendants, he pointed to 36-year-old Captain Yulius Sylvanus.

Sylvanus however told the court he thought it would have been impossible for Reza to have seen him, as he had met only Arief and used a different vehicle.

"He (Reza) was in the kitchen peeling an apple at the time I opened the door and was met by Arief and he could not have seen me," Sylvanus said.

The trial was set to resume Tuesday.



Indian policemen frisk a government official who was a passenger aboard the Pakistan-bound bus from New Delhi. The 30-seater air-conditioned bus was flagged off from the Indian capital on a test run to Lahore with only government officials on board and amid tight security. The proposed service, the regular run of which is scheduled to start on Jan. 20, is the first ever bus service between the two arch-rivals since they achieved independence from Britain in 1947 (Reuters photo)

Militant Muslims protest India-Pakistan bus service

LAHORE, Pakistan (AP) — Hundreds of militant Muslim men waving flags and condemning the government protested Friday against the first bus service in 50 years between Pakistan and its uneasy neighbour India.

Gathered outside the grand white marble Shuaba mosque in the heart of Lahore, protesters warned prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to stop the bus service or "we will forcibly stop it."

The inaugural bus left the Indian capital of New Delhi earlier Friday amid tight security and was expected to arrive in Pakistan before midnight.

The bus service is an attempt to improve relations between the two neighbours who have gone to war three times since the Asian subcontinent gained its independence from Britain in

1947. Since last May when both countries exploded underground nuclear devices and declared themselves nuclear powers, they have been under considerable pressure from the international community to extend a hand of friendship to each other.

But demonstrators in Lahore, all of whom belonged to the right-wing Islamic party, Jamaat-e-Islami, said they wanted no part of a friendship with India.

Instead they accused Sharif's government of selling out Muslim militants waging a bloody secessionist uprising in India's violence wracked state of Kashmir.

India accuses Pakistan of fomenting violence in its only Muslim dominated state where a 10-year-old insurgency has left thou-

sands of people dead.

Both neighbours lay claim to a united Kashmir which was divided between the two countries when the British withdrew from the Asian subcontinent and declared it independent.

The flash point of two previous wars many fear it could spark a fourth confrontation that could escalate into a nuclear war.

"We will never allow Nawaz Sharif to start this bus service," said Jamaat-e-Islami leader Liaqat Baluch. "This is part of an American agenda... it will send a message to Kashmiri freedom fighters that Islamabad will not support them."

Baluch said his activists would not disrupt the inaugural service but warned that if a second bus trip was attempted "we will have no choice but to stop it by force."

Study suggests some avoid fat by fidgeting

WASHINGTON (AP) — Some people seem to be able to fidget away fat, according to a Mayo Clinic study aimed at finding out why some stay slim when overeating, while others gain weight.

The study, published today in the journal Science, involved 16 volunteers fed 1,000 extra calories a day for eight weeks as instruments measured their energy use.

At the end, some of the subjects gained as much as 16 pounds, others as little as two.

The difference, says Dr. Michael D. Jensen of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., was the "fidget factor." "It is some sort of physical activity that they (the low weight-gainers) are doing more throughout the day than the others," he said.

"It could be fidgeting or moving around or just being a little more restless." The study was designed to investigate why some people seem to relentlessly gain weight, while others, eating roughly the same diet, seem to stay slim.

Jensen and his colleagues picked subjects for the study who had sedentary jobs, such as office work, and who did not engage in regular physical workouts. They were outfitted with accelerometers — instru-

ments that measure movements — to determine how much energy they expended.

Additionally, there were special blood chemistry tests to measure energy expenditure that was so slight it could not be picked up by the accelerometers.

The result showed that it was not the gross movements, such as walking or climbing stairs, that made the difference. It was the small, fidgeting-like movements that separated the fast gainers from those who stayed slim.

"The people who were burning a lot of extra calories were doing it in the activities of daily life," said Jensen. This could be fidgeting, standing up often, stretching and just the effort to maintain a good posture, he said.

The researcher said that each muscle movement burns calories and uses some of the excess energy that might otherwise be stored as fat.

"The take-home message is that every little motion counts," Jensen said. "Clearly the people who are doing little activities during the day are not gaining weight even though they were eating more. So it looks like the more you do, even in small activities, the more it counts in controlling

weight."

Previous studies have shown that people metabolise food — or break it down into chemicals used to power muscles and other bodily functions — at different rates. Jensen said his study did not address whether that might be responsible for the differences.

The study used four women and 12 men, all between the ages of 20 and 35. Jensen said the women tended to gain weight more readily than did the men.

"The fidgetiness of an individual likely plays a more important role in daily energy expenditure than previously thought," Eric Ravussin of Eli Lilly and Co., and Elliot Danforth Jr. of the University of Vermont said in an analysis of the study in Science.

"This carefully conducted study provides an interesting explanation for the differences in gain of body fat in response to overeating," Ravussin and Danforth said.

The fidgeting mechanism, they noted, "could explain why some of us escaped gaining weight, whereas others did not, after overindulging during the past holiday season."

Science is the journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Dutch ministry reports fifth mad cow case

MAARTENSDIJK, Netherlands (AP) — All livestock at a farm in this central Dutch village were being slaughtered Friday after tests revealed that one of the herd had contracted mad cow disease, the fifth case discovered in the Netherlands. A total of 80 cows, 15 sheep and a cat were destroyed and the farm sealed off to stop the spread of the disease, known officially as bovine spongiform encephalopathy. Research has linked consumption of beef from BSE-infected cattle to the Creutzfeldt-Jakob brain disease in humans. The infected cow was killed last year. Tests revealed Thursday that it was suffering from BSE, the agriculture ministry announced. Investigators were attempting to trace and destroy other cattle related to the infected cow and were investigating what it had been fed — mad cow disease is often contracted by cattle reared on feed containing offal from sheep and other animals. Such feeds have been banned in the Netherlands since 1989.

OSCE force for Kosovo to be smaller

BONN (AFP) — The OSCE verification mission in Kosovo will probably have 1,600 members and not 2,000 as initially planned. German Defense Minister Rudolf Scharping said here Friday. Germany will still be providing the first 200 men to the mission of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which is to oversee a ceasefire in the Albanian-majority Serbian province. Scharping told reporters. He said he hoped the OSCE mission could still succeed, despite its lessened numbers. Scharping said the situation in Kosovo "was each day more worrying" as neither the Kosovo rebels nor the Serbs seem ready to reach an agreement. "The hope for a political solution must not be the only basis of our action," he warned, in a reference to NATO threats to intervene if fighting resumes.

Azerbaijan prisoners stage rebellion, take hostages

BAKU, Azerbaijan (AP) — Inmates staged a pre-dawn uprising at a prison in Azerbaijan Friday, taking several guards hostage, news reports said. There were unconfirmed reports that one guard was either killed or seriously wounded. Azerbaijan's Interior Ministry declined to comment on the prison mutiny, saying information would be provided later. The rebellion began at 3 a.m. in the Gobustan prison, about 60 kilometres south of Azerbaijan's capital Baku, the Turan news agency reported. There was no immediate word on how many inmates were involved in the uprising. More than 500 are held in the prison. Russia's Interfax news agency reported. Interfax said there were unconfirmed reports that one guard had been killed, while Turan, citing unidentified sources, said one guard had been seriously wounded. The discrepancy could not immediately be resolved. The prisoners were demanding transportation out of Azerbaijan, the reports said, adding that security outside the prison was increased.

China police arrest 'healer' for deaths

SHANGHAI (R) — Chinese police have arrested a self-proclaimed healer on suspicion of causing the deaths of some 146 people, the official Shanghai Star said Friday. Hu Wanlin, an ex-convict, had called himself a doctor with magical healing powers and opened clinics in three central China provinces, the newspaper said. Police in Shanghai detained him last month after he was recognised in a hotel by an employee who had seen his picture on the cover of a magazine, it said. The newspaper did not say how the man had caused the deaths or how he had managed to elude police in so many different places. It said all of those who died had been his patients at clinics in the provinces of Shanxi, Shaanxi and Henan. Police in Shaanxi's Changan county said he was responsible for the deaths of 146 people while authorities in Henan's Shangqiu city said he caused several more deaths, the newspaper said without elaborating. The case was under investigation, it said.

Sri Lankan troops kill 18 rebels in renewed fighting

COLOMBO (AFP) — Sri Lankan soldiers shot dead at least 18 suspected Tamil Tiger guerrillas in renewed clashes in the north of the country as the navy attacked rebel boats, the defence ministry here said Friday. Soldiers conducted a "small group operation" near the town of Oddusudan and killed eight members of the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) Thursday and recovered a haul of arms, the ministry said. It said another four men of the LTTE were killed by army snipers in the same area while six Tigers were killed at Paranthan during two clashes. The ministry said two soldiers were wounded during the clashes. In the latest fighting, the navy destroyed a boat of the LTTE but the defence ministry did not give casualty figures. However, a state-run evening daily, The Observer, said 30 Tigers were killed in the attack. The Tiger guerrillas are leading a campaign for independence in the island's northern and eastern regions where the two million Tamil minority is concentrated. More than 55,000 people have been killed in fighting in the past 26 years.

At least 250 corpses collected after clashes in Congo capital

BRAZZAVILLE (AFP) — At least 250 corpses have been collected over recent days in southern areas of Congo's capital, scene of clashes between government troops and militia, the energy minister said Friday. The bodies were gathered along the main roads in Makelele and Baongo, Jean-Marie Tassoua told AFP. But since fighting between the army and Ninja fighters of former prime minister Bernard Kolélas raged across the districts from Dec. 18 to 20, the final toll is expected to be much greater. On Dec. 31, President Denis Sassou Nguesso said "several hundred" people had been killed in fighting in the capital and in the surrounding Pool region. Anonymous military sources, however, said the fighting in Brazzaville alone would have killed between 1,000 and 1,500 people.

China slams India for failing to stop protests by Tibetan separatists

BEIJING (AFP) — China Friday blasted India for failing to stop a group of Tibetan protesters from storming the Chinese embassy in New Delhi and demanding independence from the Communist superpower.

"The Indian government did nothing to intercept the protest," a spokesman for China's foreign ministry told AFP.

"This violates the Indian government's promise to Chinese not to allow splinterists to carry out these kinds of activities," he added.

Around 60 protesters from the Tibetan Youth Congress stormed the main gates of the Chinese

embassy compound in the Indian capital Thursday, taking the Indian security guards by surprise.

They had just completed an 11-day march across northern India to promote the cause of Tibetan independence.

Around 20 of the activists managed to scale the gates and ran inside the complex, shouting slogans.

The remainder burned and then stamped on a Chinese flag, chanting "Freedom for Tibet" and "Down with China," before leaving the compound voluntarily.

"India's behaviour has hurt the sovereignty of China. The Chinese government hopes that the Indian

government will put forth serious representations and protests." China's foreign ministry spokesman said. A Chinese delegation pulled out of a business conference in the northern city of Jaipur after learning that organisers had invited Tibet's exiled spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, to give a lecture.

India is home to around 100,000 Tibetans, most of whom fled their homeland along with the Dalai Lama after an abortive uprising against Chinese rule in 1959.

The Dalai Lama heads a government-in-exile based in the northern Indian hill town of Dharamsala.



Ex-communist Italian Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema (right) talks with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican during an historic meeting half a century after the Roman Catholic Church excommunicated Marxists. The 78-year-old Polish Pontiff, a tireless crusader against communism, received D'Alema, who is not a believer and is the first former Communist to become prime minister of Italy, at the Vatican with full pomp (Reuters photo)

Former Communist leader visits Vatican

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The largest Communist party in the West went out of business nearly a decade ago, but the official visit to the Vatican by its former leader fascinates Italians mindful of past excommunications and recriminations.

Massimo D'Alema, the first former Communist to head a West European government, met Friday with Pope John Paul II for the first time as premier of Italy.

RAI, the state-run TV network, provided live coverage, as did Vatican TV. Newspapers for days have devoted pages to the visit, even supplying diagrams of D'Alema's route through the Vatican palaces.

Vatican dignitaries and a papal brass band greeted D'Alema when he arrived at the Vatican. Swiss Guards in their gold, crimson and blue uniforms, designed by Michelangelo, stood at attention.

Passing solemnly through one magnificent room after another in the sumptuous palace, D'Alema and his entourage made their way to the Pontiff's private library under the glare of TV cameras.

"Good day," the pope said to the premier. "Welcome." They spoke for nearly 30 minutes in private.

On the surface, there is nothing unusual in an Italian premier taking the 10-minute limousine ride from his office to the headquarters of the Roman Catholic church across the unmarked border dividing Italy from the tiny, independent city-state.

Nor is there anything out of the ordinary in the Pope receiving leaders of countries where communists actually held sway. In his 20 years as Pope, John Paul has met with the leaders of his native Poland and the former Soviet Union, as well as with Fidel Castro of Cuba. At the same time, his steely opposition to Soviet Communism helped bring about its demise.

For many Italians, the D'Alema visit is a sign of acceptance for those who joined what is known here as the "other church," the Italian Communist Party, which for nearly 50 years fenced with Catholics for power.

The Vatican, the Italian church and the U.S. government waged a successful battle to keep the Communists at bay after World War II. Pope Pius XII decreed automatic excommunication for party members.

But they remained a force to be dealt with, and some leading Catholic politicians worked for the day when Catholics and Communists would jointly lead

the country in what was known as the "historic compromise."

And in recent years, the Vatican and the Italian left have found much common ground, such as opposition to the 1991 Gulf War and the recent U.S. airstrikes on Iraq.

"It is no secret Massimo is a nonbeliever, but he greatly admires the pope," D'Alema's wife, Linda Giuva, told the magazine Donna Moderna (Modern Woman) in a pre-visit interview.

D'Alema rose through the ranks of the party, then after the fall of the Berlin wall transformed it along social democratic lines. Hardliners outraged at the change broke away and formed their own small Marxist party, still bearing the Communist name.

On at least one issue, John Paul is expected to exert pressure on D'Alema during their private talks. The Pope has taken up the call of Italy's bishops to provide parents who send their children to Catholic schools with some form of tax credit, an issue that has divided the Italian left.

The Pope greeted D'Alema in October when John Paul made an official visit to the presidential palace. D'Alema was not yet premier, but the visit came just hours after he was named to form a government, and their handshake made news.

Before the Pope's stop at the Quirinal Palace, D'Alema had joked that he considered the Vatican "a friendly country."

Senators search for common ground to avoid partisan impeachment trial

WASHINGTON (AP) — After swearing to judge President Bill Clinton fairly and impartially, senators are working feverishly to keep the first presidential impeachment trial this century from becoming a model of partisan discord.

Republican Majority Leader Trent Lott and his Democratic counterpart, Tom Daschle, are combining a heavy dose of symbolism with intense closed-door negotiations to forge agreements on how to conduct the trial.

They invited their rank-and-file members to an extraordinary informal meeting Friday in an ornate room that was the Senate's chamber, and scene of great debates, in the first half of the 19th century.

An attempt to hold the same meeting in the Old Senate Chamber collapsed Thursday after partisan rancor broke out only moments after Clinton was formally made a defendant in the first presidential impeachment trial since the Andrew Johnson case in 1868. The primary cause of the rupture was a dispute over the need for witnesses, which Republicans favour and Democrats oppose.

Republicans Thursday had scheduled votes on their proposed ground rules and also on a Democratic alternative. With a 55-45 advantage, the Republicans would have won the fight, but at the price of setting a partisan tone that might never be overcome in the proceedings.

Lott pulled back from the brink and kept negotiating, deciding senators should "keep calm and cool and dignified."

His move prompted Daschle to proclaim: "I think there is some common ground. We don't want the first vote to be a partisan vote, and it came very close to being one," said Republican Sen. Sam Brownback.

Despite such hopeful statements, the two parties were unable to bridge the gap during the day — especially over the prospect that witnesses such as former White House intern Monica Lewinsky would testify about sex in the tradition-bound Senate.

Clinton is charged under two articles of impeachment, both related to his attempts to conceal his extramarital affair with Ms. Lewinsky. One article

charges the president with perjury before a federal court panel, the second with obstructing justice.

Republican Sen. Ted Stevens, echoed the thoughts of many Democratic senators, commenting he had "serious questions" about calling Ms. Lewinsky to testify about her sexual escapades with the president at the White House.

House prosecutors have failed to allay such concerns, despite expressing a willingness to avoid questions to witnesses on explicit sexual material.

At the White House, spokesman Joe Lockhart told reporters: "We are convinced we can make a compelling case that will lead the United States Senate not to remove the president."

The charges against Clinton were brought in the name of the House of Representatives and "of the people of the United States of America." But as every senator was aware as the trial opened, the articles were approved by a House that voted along mostly partisan lines.

"We are now jurors," Stevens said. "We don't want chaos." While the sen-

ators insisted it was solely their prerogative to run the trial, Lott and Republican Sen. Rick Santorum nonetheless met for several hours Thursday evening with the House prosecution team.

"It was a good discussion on some of the options," said Paul McNulty, a spokesman for the House Judiciary Committee.

"The senators listened to us." As the Senate worked to determine Clinton's future, the president planned a trip to the Midwestern city of Detroit, where he planned to deliver a speech Friday to the city's business leaders touting the success of the economy during his presidency.

The speech was planned before anyone knew it would fall on the day after the opening of the Senate trial proceedings. But the benefits of escaping Washington's turmoil were not lost on White House aides eager to show that Clinton was above the fray and focused on issues.

Following a trial, whose dates are still not set, the Senate would vote on Clinton's future. It takes a two-thirds vote to convict a president and remove him.

Seeing Khmer Rouge face justice goal for researcher

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — Youk Chhang was 16 years old when the Khmer Rouge imprisoned him for gathering grass in a desperate attempt to provide his pregnant sister with enough to eat.

Twenty-two years later, he is poised to turn the tables on his pitiless captors.

Director of the Documentation Centre of Cambodia, Youk Chhang has painstakingly gathered evidence against the Khmer Rouge in hope the brutal leadership will one day be tried for genocide.

For most of his adult life, the possibility of seeing them face justice seemed remote as their guerrilla army remained hidden in the dense jungles along Cambodia's border with Thailand.

Nearly all have made peace since 1996. The defection of several leading members has led to stepped-up pressure at home and abroad for someone to be held accountable for the deaths of as many as 2 million people under their rule.

"I think they are trapped by the truth," Youk Chhang said.

"They can't go back to the jungle and they can't escape justice." After the Khmer Rouge were overthrown in 1979, Youk Chhang made his way to refugee camps in Thailand and then to the United States, where he met Ben Kiernan, a Yale professor specializing on Cambodia.

Yale and Kiernan were chosen by the U.S. State Department to open a project four years ago to gather evidence against the Khmer

Rouge in case any were ever brought to trial.

Youk Chhang, who worked as an anti-Khmer Rouge activist and earned a degree in political science at the University of Texas, was chosen to head the Cambodian office.

Like the Nazi leaders of Germany, the Khmer Rouge kept detailed records of their killing machine. The Documentation Centre has gathered more than 350,000 documents in four years.

When a Vietnamese invasion quickly overpowered their forces in 1979, leader Pol Pot and his henchmen fled in panic, leaving behind their paper trail of death.

Sifting through the documents, some as mundane as love poems written by guerrilla commanders to faraway wives, has been tedious work for the 25 staff members.

But as each internal memo, teletype and confession is filed into computers, the fruits of their labour are slowly coming.

Names, events and dates are now easily cross-referenced, revealing the paranoid and murderous chain of command.

"It's like a puzzle," Youk Chhang explained. "If you read each individual paper, it looks like nothing. But when you put each page together, then you can see the whole picture of the genocide in Cambodia."

Researchers agree that enough evidence has been unearthed to indict the entire standing committee of the Khmer Rouge, although the strength of each case varies.

Easiest to convict would be political chief Nuon Chea, who dealt with internal security and passed memos on executions and torture to and from Pol Pot and his underlings, Youk Chhang said.

There is also strong evidence against the regime's foreign minister Ieng Sary and regional commanders Ke Pauk and Ta Mok, according to researchers.

Youk Chhang said his current priority is to search for evidence against nominal leader Khieu Samphan, who defected to the government along with Nuon Chea two weeks ago.

When U.N. legal experts visited Cambodia in November to assess existing evidence, Youk Chhang said they found convincing cases existed against every top leader except Khieu Samphan.

"We don't have files on him yet that are like a smoking gun," Youk Chhang said.

The U.S. experts are expected to complete a report on the possibilities of holding a Khmer Rouge tribunal at the end of the month.

It will be forwarded to Prime Minister Hun Sen, who has refused to arrest Khmer Rouge defectors until an international or Cambodian court issues warrants.

For the moment, Youk Chhang works doggedly for the day that those responsible for the death of so many — including one of his sisters and several relatives — pay for their crimes.

"I want to prove to the Khmer Rouge that I am strong and that I can come back and get them for what they did," he said.

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Conflicting dates

THE PALESTINIAN leadership is obviously weighing very carefully the pros and cons of declaring a Palestinian state on May 4, 1999. The complexity of the issue was heightened in the wake of the Israeli decision to hold national elections on May 17, nearly two weeks after that date. The Israelis clearly chose the May 17 date with May 4 in mind in a bid to exert additional pressure on the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) not to implement its solemn pledge. By doing so, the Palestinians clearly risk paying the price of setting the stage for the re-election of a new right wing government in Israel.

It is clear by now that whatever the PNA decides will have an impact on the Israeli elections. Former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres has recently hinted that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat is still open-minded on the issue if certain conditions are met including the resumption of the peace talks and the rapid implementation of the Wye River deal. Other Palestinian officials have suggested that a delay of six months would not be fatal to the Palestinian commitment to declare their own state provided there is some progress on the peace front. Others maintain that the May 4 date is sacrosanct and that any waiver on this date would give the wrong signal to Israel.

In retrospect, the establishment of a free and sovereign Palestinian state necessitates the resolutions of other issues which are slated for agreement in the final status talks between Israel and the Palestinians. Without an agreement on the border issue, the future of Jerusalem, control over water and the fate of the Palestinian refugees, any Palestinian state would be incomplete. That is why the Palestinians would be better advised to delay the date for declaring their state in order to preempt the bid of Israeli extremists to seize power again and make the resolutions of the complementary issues to statehood impossible. The removal of hard-liners from power in Israel should be a strategic objective for the PNA and must therefore be factored in the decision on the issue. A six-month delay would not compromise or jeopardise the Palestinian determination to have their own state on their own soil. That is why we favour restraint on this very important subject.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek commented on the Washington Post recently revealed that UNSCOM is little more than a "spying group" working for the Central Intelligence Agency and Mossad, using the U.N.'s immunity to serve U.S. and Israeli. The Secretary of State's spokesman admitted that the newspaper is not in the habit of reporting false news, added Fanek. It is an international scandal that humiliates both the U.N. and the U.S. — which is still determined to attack Iraq — and all countries that call on Iraq to implement the "legitimate" U.N. resolutions.

Al Dustour's Oraib Rintawi said the Iraqi regime does not learn from its mistakes, but keeps repeating them making the crisis more difficult. President Saddam Hussein's recent call for Arabs to launch an "unholy" war against their regimes raises many questions, said Rintawi. Did the Iraqi president miscalculate the demonstrations in Egypt, Jordan, Palestine and Syria and consider them an indication of their willingness to take over Arab leaderships? Did the Iraqi policy begin to lean towards a new stage in which it will interfere in Arab countries' internal affairs? Did the Iraqi leader decide, after eight years of sanctions, to destroy everything around him, supposing that his country will enter the "final status" stage after Ramadan? asked the writer.

A spanner in the works

Jordanian Perspective



Dr. Musa Kilani

not so naive as to think the Arab masses were waiting for his call to turn against their governments; or that he was feeding Iraqi nationalism by thumping his own chest while his people are living in misery and suffering. He would not have been so naive to think that the Arab condemnation of the Anglo-American military action against

Baghdad was a voice of support for his regime instead of an expression of compassion for the people of Iraq.

So, where is the catch? What did Saddam think he achieved from issuing that nonsensical call except more Arab hostility at a time he could have done with a lot of Arab goodwill? Indeed that fits with the pattern of strange and puzzling behaviour we have been seeing in Baghdad, where, it seems, a totally different set of logic is being used while conventional wisdom and diplomacy is pushed to the background.

As far as our vantage point in Amman, prospects of collective Arab action towards lifting U.N. sanctions on Iraq were set back by the call along with what had appeared to be a mood of Arab resignation into accepting that the Arab World has to deal with Saddam, however ruthless and unscrupulous he might be, as an inevitable reality in the region. Definitely, that could not have been Saddam's objective. Or was it part of his unpredictable behaviour pattern?

Now it is publicly known that the postponement came upon the insistence of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The difference in approach was also visible in the media approach of the GCC countries, with some newspapers saying they favoured an Arab summit to discuss the Iraq crisis while others sought to throw cold water on prospects of convening a meeting of the Arab heads of state.

That the Arab countries felt the need for collective Arab action in the context of Iraq was in itself a gain for Baghdad in that the door was open for starting to make mends in the Arab World and healing the wounds of the Gulf crisis.

It is against this backdrop that Saddam dropped his bombshell of a call for the ousting of Arab governments allied with the U.S. Instead of building goodwill and faith with fellow Arab leaders, Saddam threw more seeds of hostility and did away with prospects of his rehabilitation into the Arab fold.

It is puzzling to figure out what Saddam sought to achieve through the call. Surely, the Iraqi leader is

TRUST IRAQ to throw a spanner in the works anytime things assume a brighter face. Iraqi President Saddam Hussein did just that last week when he called for revolts against Arab regimes that he felt did not support him enough during and after December's Anglo-American military strikes against his country. In a way, some of the Gulf Arab states were slowly coming around to publicly accepting the idea of living with the Iraqi regime as an inevitable element of regional life, and, at the same time, seeking to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people following the military action.

That acceptance was the first step towards a concerted Arab effort to demand from the international community, as represented by the U.N., that the Iraq file be closed as soon as possible by adopting speedier action and by clearly spelling out what is expected of Baghdad.

The Arab stand would have been that the blanket American-British demand for Iraqi "cooperation with the U.N. in implementing U.N. resolutions related to the Gulf crisis"

simply no longer works. The U.N. has to specify, line by line, what Iraq must declare and surrender to U.N. weapon inspectors. Short of that, the demand that Iraq "obey" the U.N. has become a cliché and is no longer a valid currency because it can be as broadly or narrowly interpreted as befits the U.S.-British alliance against Iraq.

The Arab World would have endorsed Iraq's full cooperation with the U.N. and its implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, but on the basis of a clearly charted course of action that leaves no room for the anti-Iraq alliance to move the goal-post every time Iraq moved closer to it.

Major differences have appeared in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in its stand towards Iraq. There seems to be a split between the UAE and Saudi Arabia as indicated by the swift denial issued by Abu Dhabi, current head of the six-country alliance, that the GCC sought the postponement of a December meeting of Arab League foreign ministers until after the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Exploiting millennium mania

Out of order



Brian Brown

WITH LESS than 356 shopping days left until the end of the beginning of the Millennium, would-be celebrants are accelerating preparations for the occasion around the world. The planners in Britain continue work on the controversial (and bizarre) Millennium Dome. Prizes are being announced for the couple that has the first baby after the midnight that ushers in the next 1,000 years of human history. Travel packages are on offer to people who wish to experience what will surely be the titillating effects of being in the remote places that will be the first to welcome in the new Millennium. Other projects have been scheduled to ensure that people will remember the event, thanks to out-of-control spending or constructions that have no use past Jan. 1, 2000, no matter how much they drink on New Year's Eve.

But all these preparations are rather pedestrian compared to the celebrations some are planning right here in the Middle East. The persons whom I feel are doing the best job to live up to the place for the next New Year's Eve are the "doomsday" or "millennialist" Christians, whose project centres not on having a good time or building a lasting memorial to mankind's fascination with time, but instead on the return of Jesus Christ to earth. A number of organisations grouping such people are forecast to arrive in the region during this year either to be on the spot when the Lord returns from heaven or to facilitate His arrival. And they've already started: one such group, the U.S.-based Concerned Christians, is scheduled to be deported from Israel for their reported activities to this end, which allegedly included plans to kill Israeli police in the belief that the bloodshed would encourage Jesus to return to the mortal realm.

Oddly enough, Israel is working to keep this and other such groups out of the country, based on the belief that their presence and possible ensuing results such as killings, arson attacks and large

numbers of psychologically-disturbed individuals milling around Jerusalem and other areas bothering people would outweigh any benefits. However, such organisations are usually wealthy, and in times such as these, with Israel's economy in the doldrums, it is hard to believe that the country refuses to take advantage of the situation. Besides, Israel would probably score a tonne of points with Jesus by hosting these groups, if He actually arrives as predicted.

On the other hand, it is not difficult to see why Israel is somewhat reticent about welcoming such doomsday cults. They do, it must be admitted, have some odd beliefs. One is that the year 2000 is actually the Millennium when, in fact, 2001 is the true Millennium. But this shouldn't be held against them, since the rest of the world is caught up in the same delusion. More problematic is the generally accepted historical conclusion that Jesus was not born in 1 AD, but rather in 4 BC. If true, this would mean that the beginning of the Third Christian Millennium actually took place in 1997, and that everyone is wasting their time, doomsday cults included.

But I digress. The point is that there is money to be made, even if 2000 is a fake Millennium, and if Israel refuses to have anything to do with these wealthy, if unbalanced, groups and people, then

Jordan should be ready to step in and accept the challenge. In order to minimise any possible dangers that may be associated with these persons, I propose that "doomsday tours" be organised. These "doomsday tours," which can last for any period of time up to the end of the year, would include a number of closely-monitored activities. The following would be a typical one-week "doomsday tour":

Day 1: Arrival in Jordan.
 Days 2-6: Tours of historical, religious and archaeological sites. Tour members will distribute religious literature and annoy other, more normal tourists. Carrying large crosses and chanting is optional.

Day 7: Mass suicide. Poisoning by cyanide-laced KoolAid is recommended. If my recommendations are followed, and I strongly urge the Ministry of Tourism to immediately begin offering this package, then Jordan could reap huge economic benefits while avoiding potential trouble from over-zealous Christian pilgrims. But in any event, as far as I am concerned, it doesn't matter, for I am hedging my bets on 2001 as the true Millennium, despite the considerations outlined above. I am already looking forward to enjoying the looks on all the cult members' faces when, as I believe, the Lord returns in 2001 instead of 2000. But then again, if the world is destroyed when He arrives, I won't have that long to enjoy it.

RECOMMENDED READING: *The Time Machine*, by H.G. Wells. A science fiction classic from the 19th century. *The Time Machine* tells the story of a man who invents (you guessed it) a device that allows travel along the fourth dimension. After travelling countless centuries into the future, the protagonist discovers that humanity has diverged into two separate races, one of which preys on the other. I'd like to get my hands on a time machine to get away from all the Millennium hype.

Columnists ponder Arab World in next Millennium

Columnists last week focused on Iraq's stand off with the United States, the Israeli elections and Arab unity

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek commented on the Washington Post recently revealed that UNSCOM is little more than a "spying group" working for the Central Intelligence Agency and Mossad, using the U.N.'s immunity to serve U.S. and Israeli. The Secretary of State's spokesman admitted that the newspaper is not in the habit of reporting false news, added Fanek. It is an international scandal that humiliates both the U.N. and the U.S. — which is still determined to attack Iraq — and all countries that call on Iraq to implement the "legitimate" U.N. resolutions.

for the cancellation of the Wye River accord signed between the Palestinian National Authority and Israel in the U.S. The writer charged that the American administration's sponsorship of the peace process favours the Jewish state. As proof of this fact, writes Issa, is the Hebron agreement and the Wye River Plantation Memorandum. "The only thing we can do is to pray to God for our Palestinian brethren, since we can do nothing else. We are a part of the Arab World which does not want to do anything or meet at one point on vital issues," said Issa.

Al Ra'i's Mahmoud Rimawi commented on the war of words between Iraq and Egypt which would only lead to weakening the Iraqi position and hinder holding a general Arab summit where the Iraq's stand-off with the U.S. would be the leading point of discussion. The normalisation of Iraqi-Egyptian relations was hit hard by this war of words, wrote Rimawi, and may have a negative impact on Iraq's relations with Moscow and Paris. Both Russia and France recognise Egypt's influence in the Arab World and draw their poli-



tics accordingly. Rimawi said Iraq is the only loser in this war because the mass protests in Egypt, relatively speaking, reflects the position of the Egyptian government. No such demonstrations could occur without the tacit consent of the Egyptian government, said the writer. It is only Egypt that can bridge the gap between Iraq and the Arab World. Iraq needs Egyptian support regardless of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's earlier comments about it. It is feared that the United States will take advantage of this situation by launching another missile attack against Iraq, said Rimawi.

Al Dustour's editorial ruled out any possibility that Iraq would allow the United Nations Special Commission to disarm Iraq to resume its work after it became very clear to everybody that the primary objective of the mission is to spy on Iraq. Iraq has always complained that Scott Ritter, the second man in UNSCOM, is a spy for the Mossad, said the Arabic daily. No one believed Iraqi accusations until the American officials questioned Ritter on his relationship to Mossad. It then became

LETTERS

Inextricable links

To the editor:

I AM WRITING in reference to the editorial by Ahmad Majdoubeh (J.T., January 7-8, 1998), entitled 'Market Needs and Relevant Education'.

I would like to begin by commending Dr. Majdoubeh on his choice of topic. I must also state upfront that my motive for writing this reply is to explore other related issues rather than to simply disagree with his opinions.

Human capital is for Jordan what oil is for Gulf countries. The development and maintenance of a resource so vital to the national economy and the well-being of the nation must be carefully planned.

Dr. Majdoubeh seems to disavow tying education entirely to market needs.

His article leaves many open questions which may give the false impression that tying education and market needs is impractical or unwarranted.

Meanwhile, Jordan's economy continues to plunge into deep recession, i.e., stifling economic growth indices, soaring unemployment and inflation rates, and declining real income levels. For the average citizen it simply means a real economic hardship.

There is no better time to re-examine education and survey the market to identify its needs — something that should have been done many years ago.

The market's definition must extend beyond the local market to include regional and global markets; and must also take into account the commodity or service in question.

There has to be some connection to the real world. That connection can have many rewards as it provides: 1) guidance on how the knowledge learned will be utilised, 2) incentives for students to learn better and more — they value the knowledge they receive, 3) well-prepared and innovative labour force to businesses, and finally as a result 4) it provides the society with more productive, "content," and happy individuals.

For years, we have heard and read about the superiority of our educational system and the quality of its graduates. That is true to some extent, but the system must keep up with the changing global political, social, and economical, and technological environments. Education must be tuned to market needs, and at the same time, have an active role in influencing these needs. Otherwise, Jordan will not be able to compete in the highly volatile and competitive computer-chip-based business environment.

I will use my own personal experience while studying civil engineering at Yarmouk University in 1981 to support my argument. We had a good dose of basic sciences in the first two years. However, we used the American Concrete Institute and the American Steel Code in our design courses. We even used English units. So after years in college, we had to convert the dimensions of steel reinforcement from inches to millimetres, unaware of the specification of steel at a local dealer. Not once during my undergraduate education did we have a real case study or example from the market we were preparing to serve. We were taught how to apply the code but not trained to use that knowledge to solve problems. The emphasis was to replicate, memorise, and repeat to get B's and A's — no credit for innovation or thinking. Our professors lacked the practical knowledge and experience to provide us with a real perspective about engineering practices in Jordan.

What the educational system needs is information — accurate, practical, realistic, and timely, in order to make informed decisions about direction, priorities, and resources. I beg to differ with Dr. Majdoubeh. I believe education must address real problems for real people. We cannot afford education for education's sake. It is not about finding jobs, it is about the quality of life as we know it — at its simplest form, it is about the difference between a bright future and a grim one.

Dr. Ayman Smadi
 United States

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld upon request but only under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

Rewers

— *The New York Times*

Israeli economy seen slowing further

TEL AVIV (R) — The Israeli economy looks set to end the 1990s with a whimper with many economists predicting growth this year will slow to the lowest level in a decade.

While the inflation rate was expected to moderate in 1999, real interest rates would remain high, putting the brakes on consumer spending and pushing up unemployment.

Political uncertainty ahead of elections, brought forward by a year and a half to May, and the government's failure so far to pass the 1999 budget due to political squabbling, further clouded the picture.

But some said the biggest factor this year would be the state of the world economy.

"I think the greatest influence in 1999 will be from slower growth in the United States and Europe," said Shauli Katznelson, chief economist at Israel Discount Bank.

As these are Israel's main markets, exports of goods and services excluding diamonds would grow at a very slow rate and invest-

ment would continue to decline, he said.

Katznelson estimated gross domestic product would expand only 1.2 per cent, against 1.9 per cent growth in 1998 (according to preliminary data) and below the Treasury's forecast of 2.0-2.5 per cent.

"Unemployment could climb to 10 per cent against the current 8.4 per cent," he said.

Jonathan Katz, chief economist at Solid Financial Markets, was slightly more optimistic in his forecast than many economists, estimating GDP would grow by 2.0 per cent.

"I think a lot of projects will kick in the second half," Katz said.

He said wage levels were one of the biggest uncertainties facing the economy. The Histadrut labour federation is due to begin wage talks with the government soon.

"Since it is an election year, it may be easier to put pressure on the Finance Ministry for larger wage agreements and create labour havoc," Katz said.

Any increased spending

on public sector wages could come at the expense of infrastructure spending, which economists agreed was crucial to revitalising the Israeli economy.

Many economists dismissed the notion that the government may open its coffers to win voter support ahead of elections.

"Even though we don't have a budget I believe the government will act responsibly," Katznelson said.

The fate of the shekel, which depreciated 15 per cent against the dollar in 1998, was also crucial to the economy.

The weaker shekel boosted inflation in the period between September and November, leading the central bank to hike interest rates by 4.0 percentage points in November.

"The impact of the depreciation of the shekel on growth will be clearly negative as the purchasing power of households will be negatively affected," Koor Futures Market economist, Ygal Sebban said.

Koor expected the shekel to remain stable within a

range of 4.10-4.20 shekels per dollar in the next few months.

Since the interest rate hikes of November the shekel had regained some strength. Its recovery picked up steam in the first three days of trading in 1999, when it gained 2.3 per cent against the dollar to 4.07 shekels per dollar on Wednesday.

Sebban said the appreciation would not change his forecast of 1.1 per cent growth in 1999. "Most of the negative impact of last year's depreciation is still going to be there. The Bank of Israel has increased interest rates and it will take time to lower them," he said.

He currently sees inflation moderating in 1999 to 6.4 per cent from an estimated 8.6-8.8 per cent in 1998.

Katz estimated inflation would fall to 4.5 per cent, similar to Katznelson's forecast.

As inflation falls, the Bank of Israel was expected to pare back nominal interest rates but real rates would remain high.

Egypt aims to develop bourses to attract investors

CAIRO (R) — Egypt will develop its stock and bond markets and pursue reforms to raise foreign investment and national savings in 1999, officials and economists said on Wednesday.

"The ministry is particularly concerned with strengthening the stock market as a primary channel to attract national and foreign capital," said Economy Minister Youssef Boutros-Ghali.

He was speaking to a parliament committee on Tuesday about 1999 economic targets.

"We intend to take necessary steps to increase confidence in the Egyptian stock market and encourage investment until it becomes the primary stock market in the region," he said.

Privatisation and foreign investment have been the jewel in the crown of International Monetary Fund-supported economic reforms pursued aggressively by Egypt.

Investors are generally optimistic about the country as an emerging market but say much needs to be done in areas including access to information and cutting red tape.

The outlook said the government has identified five target areas for 1999: foreign and local investment, national savings, economic growth, exports and administrative performance.

Boutros-Ghali put investment for 1998/99 (July-June) at 66 billion pounds (\$19 billion) from 62 billion pounds the previous year. He forecast the gross domestic product of 278.4 billion pounds to rise to 298 billion pounds "in the coming year".

He said in the speech new stock market regulations would be introduced and transparency and information flow improved.

A parliamentary source told Reuters the minister said new bonds would be introduced to deepen the stock market, which has a capitalisation of about 74 million pounds.

"He said a market specialising in the fixed income bond market will be introduced, and the setting up of closed-end long and medium term investment bonds will be encouraged," said the source.

There are already signs that Egypt is set on deepening the bond market, which analysts say needs to be diversified and feature regular issues.

The government wasted no time by kicking off the new year with an offer on January 3, the first day of trade in 1999, of seven-year treasury bonds worth 500 million pounds at a fixed rate of 10 per

cent. The offer closes on January 14.

"1999 will be the year of the bond," Capital Markets Authority head Abdel-Hamid Ibrahim told reporters last month. "The coming year will see tangible activity in the bond market."

The government offered its first bonds in 1998. Moustafa Assal, head of the fixed income desk at EFG Hermes Securities Brokerage, said he expected the government to issue more debt and wel-

comed Boutros-Ghali's statement.

"This is going to help the bond market. They need to push secondary trading in bonds and increase liquidity," he said.

"For the moment it's positive, but how far it goes I don't know. We have to rely on individuals more who are non-existent in the bond market now because there is not enough liquidity."

Trade in equities outstrips the value of trade in bonds,

which the Capital Markets Authority put at 969 million pounds from the beginning of 1998 through mid-November, compared to 380 million pounds in all of 1997.

The value of trade in shares was 13.6 billion pounds in the same 1998 period compared to 19.9 billion in 1997, it said.

Analysts have said the development of the bond market had not kept pace with the equity market because the latter was spurred by privatisations.

Bank of England causes surprise by cutting interest rate to 6.0 per cent

LONDON (AFP) — The Bank of England on Thursday surprised markets with its fourth interest rate cut in a row, citing the slowdown of the British economy and subdued international inflationary pressures.

The bank cut its base rate by 0.25 basis points to 6.0 per cent, which is still double the rate of 3.0 per cent inside the euro-zone snubbed by Britain.

Shares rallied immediately after the surprise announcement, but the pound remained stable.

The bank said in a statement: "Since the (monetary policy) committee's December meeting, domestic data and survey evidence have, on balance, shown a continuing slowdown in the UK economy."

It added that the labour market "seems to have reached a turning point," with tireless calls for higher wages from British workers easing as economic slowdown here looms.

The bank also said that "the risks from the international environment remain clearly on the

downside."

Plummeting commodity prices have raised the spectre of deflation in the global economy, which itself faces reduced growth in the wake of the Asian and Russian financial meltdown.

Business welcomed the reduction but said that further cuts would be needed to head off recession here.

The chief economic advisor to the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) employers' group, Kate Barker, said: "A further quarter point cut is welcome in itself, but is unlikely to dispel industry's New Year blues. Further interest rate cuts will be needed to ward off the danger of outright recession."

Like other industry bodies, the CBI called for British rates to fall to five per cent later this year.

The deputy director general of the British Chambers of Commerce, Ian Peters, said: "With the danger of recession in 1999 now a major concern, British business will applaud this decision."

He added: "Our ultimate objective must be to bring

UK interest rates into line with our European competitors in the new euro-zone as soon as possible, both to maintain the competitiveness of British business and to enhance the prospect of the U.K. joining the single currency at the earliest opportunity."

The unexpected reduction boosted share prices on the London Stock Exchange, with the FT-SE 100 index down 19.5 points at 6129.3 points shortly after, compared to a deficit of 33.4 points moments before the decision.

Most analysts had expected rates to be held steady this month, after successive reductions in the three previous months, in the light of official data showing a surprise rise in retail sales in November and trade surveys showing buoyant Christmas sales.

The governor of the Bank of England, Eddie George, had hinted earlier in the week at lower interest rates.

"If we are in a situation that is likely to deliver continued low inflation then yes interest rates can

come down," he said.

He maintained that it was unrealistic to see British rates fall to European levels in the short term.

"The situation of the United Kingdom is quite different and therefore the monetary policy needs to be different, we are at a different phase in the cycle," George said.

The British economy is now showing signs of a sharp slowdown after five years of unabated growth.

Mainland Europe, meanwhile, led by Germany and France, has shown signs of recovery after a long period of stagnation, although the recent weakness of the global economy threatens to undermine growth rates there too.

Commercial economists welcomed Britain's latest reduction. An economist at Merrill Lynch bank, Ian Stewart, said: "It reduces the chance of a very hard landing for the economy."

He added that "there is scope for further and quite aggressive rate cuts this year," predicting rates of 5.25 per cent by the end of the year.

Exchange Rates Thursday, 07-01-99 ACCESS 444888									
CURRENCY	JORDAN DYNAR	US DOLLAR	EURO	UK POUND	SWITZERLAND FRANC	GERMAN MARK	FRANCE FRANC	ITALY LIRA	SPAIN POUND
JORDAN DYNAR	1.0000	0.1888	0.1927	1.8780	1.6389	0.1945	2.3479	0.2077	0.7080
US DOLLAR	5.2977	1.0000	0.0211	0.9461	0.7421	1.0302	12.4384	1.1004	3.7508
EURO	5.1851	0.9733	1.0000	0.9432	0.7405	1.0088	12.1811	1.0778	3.6732
UK POUND	0.5325	0.1005	0.1026	1.0000	0.8792	0.1029	1.2768	0.1129	0.3692
SWITZERLAND FRANC	0.5438	0.1028	0.1048	1.0212	1.0000	1.0000	12.0749	1.0681	3.6410
GERMAN MARK	5.1427	0.9707	0.9912	0.9578	0.8509	1.0000	12.0749	1.0681	3.6410
FRANCE FRANC	0.4359	0.0804	0.0821	0.7989	0.7832	0.0828	1.0000	0.0885	0.3018
ITALY LIRA	4.8145	0.9088	0.9280	9.0418	8.9335	0.9280	11.3039	1.0000	3.4087
SPAIN POUND	21.4831	4.0581	4.1408	40.3448	39.5055	4.1774	50.4384	4.4622	15.7100
US DOLLAR	1.4124	0.2866	0.2722	2.6525	2.5873	0.2746	3.3162	0.2834	1.0000
EURO	0.8531	0.1610	0.1644	1.6022	1.5688	0.1689	2.0030	0.1772	0.6040
UK POUND	2.3722	0.4478	0.4572	4.4549	4.3622	0.4613	5.6998	0.4927	1.6795
SWITZERLAND FRANC	1.5805	0.3701	0.3778	3.6817	3.6051	0.3812	4.6028	0.4072	1.3880
GERMAN MARK	7.9434	1.4994	1.5311	14.9175	14.6072	1.5446	18.6500	1.6499	5.6238
FRANCE FRANC	1.5964	0.2957	0.3019	2.9416	2.8804	0.3046	3.6777	0.3253	1.1090
ITALY LIRA	2.6729	0.5045	0.5152	5.0192	4.9122	0.5192	6.2758	0.6592	1.9920
SPAIN POUND	11.2233	2.1165	2.1533	21.0772	20.5387	2.1824	26.3509	2.3311	7.9461
US DOLLAR	23.4851	4.4330	4.5287	44.1047	43.1871	4.5687	55.1400	4.8780	16.6275
EURO	48.5082	9.2319	9.4289	91.8468	89.9379	9.5103	114.8300	10.1584	34.6270
UK POUND	2.2593	0.4276	0.4386	4.2542	4.1857	0.4405	5.3187	0.4705	1.6038
SWITZERLAND FRANC	3.9350	0.7428	0.7585	7.3859	7.2362	0.7582	9.2388	0.8173	2.7850
GERMAN MARK	2.8936	0.5086	0.5173	5.0398	4.9348	0.5218	6.3008	0.6574	1.9000
FRANCE FRANC	16.8780	3.1481	3.2146	31.3210	30.6928	3.2491	39.1577	3.4641	11.8000
ITALY LIRA	2.3358	0.4031	0.4116	4.0708	3.9272	0.4153	5.0141	0.4439	1.5120
SPAIN POUND	1.2129	0.2289	0.2338	2.2778	2.2304	0.2359	2.8477	0.2519	0.9587

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DYNAR CENTRAL BANK BULLETIN									
CURRENCY	US DOLLAR	EURO	UK POUND	SWITZERLAND FRANC	GERMAN MARK	FRANCE FRANC	ITALY LIRA	SPAIN POUND	US DOLLAR
US DOLLAR	1.0000	0.6566	0.5954	0.7205	0.1778	0.9017	0.5284	6.0141	1.6645
EURO	0.8040	1.0000	0.8998	0.4352	0.1074	0.8446	0.3162	3.6286	0.7084
UK POUND	1.6785	2.7806	1.0000	1.9100	0.2688	1.8475	0.8875	10.1007	1.9595
SWITZERLAND FRANC	1.3858	2.2780	0.8254	1.0000	0.2468	1.2516	0.7378	8.3478	1.8163
GERMAN MARK	5.6229	9.1008	3.3486	4.0515	1.0000	5.0711	2.9718	33.8229	6.5480
FRANCE FRANC	110.5000	183.6000	68.0316	78.8891	19.7184	1.0000	56.8028	668.9882	129.1431
ITALY LIRA	1.8824	3.1331	1.1288	1.3834	0.3365	1.7084	1.0000	11.7812	2.2037
SPAIN POUND	7.9491	13.1599	4.7312	5.7248	1.4129	7.1851	4.1990	47.9880	9.2522
US DOLLAR	16.8275	27.5285	9.9003	11.8795	2.8595	14.9832	6.7895	1.0000	18.3827
EURO	34.6270	57.3285	24.9474	24.9474	6.1571	31.2236	18.2979	30.2516	40.3231
UK POUND	1.6388	2.8653	0.9350	1.1555	0.2852	1.4482	0.8475	9.4546	1.8677
SWITZERLAND FRANC	2.7899	4.6126	1.8598	2.0072	0.4954	2.5122	1.4722	18.7554	3.2445
GERMAN MARK	1.9000	3.1456	1.1313	1.3859	0.3378	1.7133	1.0040	11.4286	2.2128
FRANCE FRANC	11.0000	19.5493	7.0007	8.0072	2.0996	10.6474	6.2387	71.0150	13.7504
ITALY LIRA	1.5120	2.5933	0.9003	1.0893	0.2688	1.3834	0.7880	9.9534	1.7807
SPAIN POUND	0.8587	1.4217	0.5113	0.6187	0.1527	0.7743	0.4636	5.1648	1.0000

WORLD STOCK MARKETS									
STOCK MARKET	INDEX	CLOSING	LAST	CHANGE	PRECIOUS METALS	METAL	ASK	BID	
FRANKFURT	DAX	5443.82	5253.91	189.71	SILVER	288.85	288.20	289.20	
HONG KONG	HANG SENG	10233.80	9891.05	342.74	PLATINUM	518	518	520	
LONDON	FTSE 100	6148.80	5998.20	150.60					
NEW YORK	DJ INDEX	9544.97	9311.19	233.78					
NEW YORK	NYSE COMPOSITE	811.00	789.90	11.10					
NEW YORK	AMEX COMPOSITE	701.47	692.21	9.26					
NEW YORK	S-P 500	1272.31	1244.78	27.53					
TOKYO	NIKKEI 225	12306.90	12468.48	86.58					
PARIS	CAC 40	4284.85	4202.84	82.01					
FRANKFURT	COMPOSITE	4981.28	4881.28	0.00					

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- Herring's kin
- Eyed
- covetously
- FOR's dog
- Chanel of fashion
- Superman in movies
- Burden
- Flashing atop
- Domesticates
- Exclusively
- Bruce Springsteen song
- Controlled entrance
- Glass or metal worker
- Least colorful
- Block of paper
- Chilean currency
- Pollen-bearing organ
- Marine mount?
- Ring around the moon
- Record
- Booths
- Equipped
- Funeral tributes
- Serangoi predators
- Considerate
- Long, feathered scarf
- Ink mark
- Grieved
- Tropical porch
- John Lennon song
- Chief god of Norse mythology
- Overjoy
- European river
- Political unit
- Man's man
- Parakeet staple
- "Auld Lang"
- Water platters
- Does wrong

DOWN

- Countess
- Invention
- Climb aboard
- Potential oak
- English poet
- Bobolink
- Equipped
- Madagascar primates
- Level
- Some: Fr.
- Kenny Loggins song
- Little Orphan
- Calm intervals
- So far
- Finch line
- Strip for a beauty pageant
- Vegetable
- Game counter
- That girl
- Break "T"
- No exceptions
- Van Morrison song
- Help!
- Howard or Silver
- Mom-&-pop store grp.
- Snaky turn
- "Malcolm X" director
- Caron title role
- Arctic surface
- "Ben Hur" director
- Scotland
- Stiff hat
- Messy eaters
- With anger
- Marriage
- Hackneyed
- Way overweight
- "Ben Hur" director
- Burning coal
- "Mr. Goes to Town"
- Cole
- 12/24 or 12/31

Peanuts



Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Department of Statistics puts inflation rate in Jordan at 4.5 per cent in 1998

THE INFLATION rate in 1998 was 4.5 per cent compared to only three per cent in 1997, according to the new director general of the Department of Statistics. He attributed the rise to higher prices at varied rates in different main spending areas but quickly described the rate of inflation as within reasonable limits due to the economic recession which holds back demand on goods and services.

Hussein Shakhateh, the new statistics chief, indicated that prices of foodstuffs went up by 4.8 per cent, clothing and footwear by 2.4 per cent and housing by 2.8 per cent. He pointed out that prices rose for most items including rent which increased by 4.4 per cent and fuel and electricity by 3.8 per cent. However, prices of furniture declined by 0.2 per cent.

Industrial city in Karak will be ready during the second half of '99

THE INDUSTRIAL city in Karak will be completed during the second half of this year when it will be ready to receive industrial investment, Jordan Industrial Estate Corporation Amr Majali has announced. The Karak industrial estate is the first to be set up in the southern part of the Kingdom and will cover a total area of 580 dunams although the site at large is 1,885 dunams.

Majali said the corporation is currently preparing to promote this development project which is expected to contribute to activating the economic and construction drive just like the industrial estates in Amman and Irbid (Al Ra'i).

Tourists spent JD259m in six months

TOURISTS COMING to Jordan spent a total of JD259 million during the first six months of 1998. Of this amount, JD115.5 million were spent during the first quarter and JD143.5 million during the second quarter. The total could double if the tourism plans and programmes to increase the number of tourists and the period they stay in the Kingdom prove successful. The total spending amounted to

JD584.8 million in 1997. According to the latest statistics issued by the Central Bank of Jordan, Jordanians resident in the Kingdom spent a total of JD150 million outside Jordan during the first half of last year. Of the amount, JD67.9 million were spent in the first quarter and JD82.1 million in the second quarter. During the whole of 1997, Jordanians spent abroad a total of JD282.2 million.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR JANUARY, SATURDAY 9, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Hold your temper today. If you go blowing off steam, you might intimidate a shy, gentle, quiet type. This person has something important to say, but you'll have to coax it out. You're usually the one doing the coaching, but this time it's the other way around. Listen to someone who hardly ever says anything at all.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Your assignment for today is to help out a friend in need. This person would do just about anything for you, and probably has, without even being asked. Today, it looks like he or she needs something you can provide. You're going to have to put your antennae up in order to find out what it is.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) This looks like a very good day for travel, but watch your money carefully. Excitement, adventure, love and romance are all well favoured, but the money part could be a little tricky. Don't worry. Just be aware. If you can get by on spending a little less, you'll be thankful later that you have something in reserve.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) If you woke up with a headache this morning, don't despair. It's just your own frustration, because what you want hasn't been accomplished. Sometimes you are patient, calm, considerate and gentle, but today you're like a trapped tiger. Tell your family they'd be wise to do what you say, and quickly. So you won't have to bite their heads off.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You're likely to run into ups and downs today, but don't let that stop you. A difficult situation could be your motivation. It's all in how you look at it, right? A stumbling block and a stepping stone are pretty much the same, except for your perspective and attitude. You may have to put recently acquired skill to use sooner than you expected.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You may feel like giving your money away today, which isn't a bad idea. For example, giving a dear friend a gift, just because he or she has been a dear friend, is the best reason of all. Don't hold back. Be as generous as you can, especially if the person you're giving to doesn't usually ask for much.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You are as cute as a kitten today, and that's important, because you're going to run into some tough opposition. Something you thought was a done deal looks like its falling apart. You can still make a difference. You know just what to do to get things on track again, so give it a shot.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Don't be upset if things don't go exactly the way you planned. In fact, you should expect it. There's going to be a breakdown before you get the breakthrough you so richly deserve. If you go into the day with that attitude, when you do run into hassles, instead of being dismayed, you'll be amused.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) There's a conflict today between a person who likes to talk and one who prefers action. The talker has great ideas, but the doer is lagging behind because a practical aspect has been ignored. That's where you come in. You can act as the perfect moderator between the various factions. Creativity is required, of course.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You could butt heads with an opinionated person first thing this morning. Well, you're pretty opinionated yourself. Try to morning. Well, you're pretty opinionated yourself. Try to be nice about it. You probably have your own agenda, too. If you want to other people to go along with your ideas, you're going to have to at least listen to theirs.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) There's apt to be a big breakdown this morning in plans you've made. Don't let that stop you. You need to rearrange, regroup and go for it again. If you have determination and perseverance, which you should have by now, you won't take no for an answer. If one path is closed, keep looking around until you find another.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) There are several people who seem to be in a tussle. They can't figure out what to do next, but for you, it's pretty easy. Luckily for them, you're generous, warm and loving, so you'll explain it to them in a way they can understand. At least you'll give it a good try. They're more likely to listen to you than to each other.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz.

Privatisation seen boosting Jordan bourse in '99

By Suleiman Al Khalidil

AMMAN (R) — The chairman of Jordan's government watchdog overseeing the Amman bourse said on Friday he expected accelerated privatisation and further easing of foreign ownership rules to boost stock activity in 1999.

Bassam Al Saket, chairman of the Jordan Securities Commission, foresaw progress in a government scheme to privatise state

utilities — such as telecommunications and electricity — adding to the free float on the bourse.

"If we want this market to deepen then there has to be more available stock and the privatisation programme of the government will lead to this," Saket told reporters in an annual review.

The state owns large chunks of stock in major blue-chip firms, like Jordan Phosphate Mines and Arab Potash, among the 150 com-

panies on the bourse.

Trade has picked up strongly since the state finally sold its 33 per cent stake in Jordan Cement Factories to France's Lafarge in November.

Saket said the market would benefit from any moves in 1999 to further relax foreign ownership rules which still apply to sectors like mining, retail trade and construction where non-Jordanians are restricted to a 50 per cent ceiling.

He said progress in a two-year restructuring brief given to the Securities Commission to radically reform the bourse would help raise local and foreign investor confidence in 1999.

The commission is responsible for setting up and overseeing operations of two private sector bodies — the Amman Securities Exchange which will run the exchange's daily activities and a central depository

body to settle and clear stock.

The state-run Amman Financial Market now runs the bourse with a regulatory role.

Saket said the commission on Thursday appointed a steering committee to pave the way for a founding general assembly meeting next month to launch the new private sector bourse.

New disclosure rules have increased transparency and accountability, Saket said, and the installation of a computer dealing system, already behind schedule, was expected by March.

He expected the November decision to license six new brokerages, with a stronger capital than the current 22 firms, to bring more sophisticated services — such as custodianship, consultancy and portfolio management — to the bourse.

More foreign buying last year raised non-Jordanian share ownership to 44.3 per

cent of the 4.1 billion dinar (\$5.78 billion) capitalised market, against 38.3 per cent in 1997.

Foreigners — mostly global funds but including Arab investors — bought 205 million dinars of stock in 1998 compared to 100 million dinars for 1997.

"Net foreign investment was 124 million dinars in 1998, sharply up from the 57 million dinars in 1997," Saket said.

He said 1998 turnover rose 30.7 per cent to 464 million dinars. The official Amman Financial Market 60-share index stood at 170 points at end-1998, up a modest 0.05 points from 1997.

The market's official share index tumbled to a 15-month low last October, weighed down by economic woes at home and selling by foreign investors hurt by worldwide emerging market turmoil.

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COMPANY	OPEN	CLOSE	CHANGE
BANKS			
ARAB BK	214.000	217.000	+1.40%
WEL BK	1.370	1.340	-2.19%
EL OF JO	1.270	1.270	0.00%
MOBIL EASY BK	1.040	1.040	0.00%
YAL PHOSPH BK	2.770	2.880	+3.97%
JO KUNWAY BK	1.800	1.830	+1.65%
JO GULF BK	0.700	0.700	0.00%
JO ISLAMIC BK	1.740	1.700	-2.30%
JO INVEZ FOR BK	1.470	1.490	+1.36%
BBT ELMAL	0.880	0.870	-1.14%
PHILADELPHIA BK	0.870	0.880	+1.15%
BANKS INDEX 284.840 POINT +1.14%			
INSURANCE			
JO. FRENCH INS	2.720	2.700	-0.74%
JO GULF INS	1.530	1.880	+21.57%
INSURANCE INDEX 128.800 POINT +1.58%			
SERVICES			
ELECTRIC POWER	1.480	1.720	+16.22%
WELD ELECTRICITY	1.880	1.880	+0.00%
PORTFOLIO SECURITY	0.880	0.880	0.00%
REAL ESTATE	1.100	1.100	0.00%
JO. INTL. TRADING CE	0.270	0.270	0.00%
AL-JAYAT	0.870	0.860	-1.15%
AL-SARAJA FOR EDU	0.880	0.840	-4.55%
ARAB WTL FOR INVEZ	2.000	1.940	-3.00%
UNION LAND DEV	0.870	0.870	0.00%
UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1.100	1.100	+0.00%
SERVICES INDEX 111.200 POINT +2.02%			
INDUSTRY			
CEMENT	3.100	3.620	+16.77%
PHOSPHATE	1.510	1.770	+17.22%
ARAB POTASH	2.800	2.800	+0.00%
PETROLEUM REFINER	10.600	10.600	+0.00%
THE IND. COMML. AGR	1.270	1.070	-15.80%
ARAB PHARMACEUTI	2.660	2.610	-1.90%
CERAMIC IND	1.100	1.120	+1.82%
JO. DAIRY	2.880	2.880	+0.00%
TOBACCO & CIGARET	1.210	1.240	+2.48%
JO. PRESS	1.880	1.880	+0.00%
ARAB CHEMICAL DEV	7.000	7.000	+0.00%
INTL. STEEL	0.880	0.880	+0.00%
TAHARA	0.880	0.880	+0.00%
DAIRY AL DAWA	0.880	0.880	+0.00%
MOBIL EASY COMPLE	0.880	0.870	-1.14%
JO. STEEL	0.880	0.880	+0.00%
AL. PRESS	1.880	1.880	+0.00%
EVERYLOCK & POLYTR	0.380	0.400	+5.26%
INTL. IND	0.880	0.880	+0.00%
RETIC. CHEMICAL	0.230	0.230	+0.00%
ROCKWOOL	0.280	0.280	+0.00%
UNIVERSAL CHEMICA	1.150	1.120	-2.61%
INTL. CABLE	0.880	0.880	+0.00%
SULPHO. CHEMICALS	0.380	0.380	+0.00%
ARAB CENTER FOR P	1.180	1.280	+8.47%
AL. DAY	1.280	1.270	-0.78%
UNIVERSAL MODERN I	0.620	0.680	+9.68%
FOOD FACTORIES	1.090	1.090	+0.00%
IND. RESOURCES	0.480	0.480	+0.00%
NEW CARLES	0.870	0.870	+0.00%
INTL. ALUMINIUM	0.720	0.720	+0.00%
INDUSTRY INDEX 82.800 POINT +7.75%			
PARALLEL			
EXPORT BK OF	0.880	0.810	-7.95%
JO. TRADING FACULTY	0.470	0.430	-8.51%
UNION INVEZ CORP	0.700	0.680	-2.86%
AL. BAKAL	0.880	0.880	+0.00%
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INDUSTRIAL	0.880	0.880	+0.00%
ARAB JO. INVEZ	1.080	1.020	-5.56%
GRAND INDEX 174.74 POINT +2.71%			

Two Saudi banks in preliminary merger talks

RIYADH (AFP) — Saudi American Bank (Samba) and United Saudi Bank (USB) are holding merger talks to create the Middle East's second largest private commercial bank in terms of assets, USB's chairman said Wednesday.

If it goes ahead, it will be the largest merger of its kind to date in the region, with a combined market capitalisation, based on Tuesday's share price of \$5.6 billion, the statement from Kingdom Holding Co. said.

Kingdom Holding Co. is owned by Saudi billionaire investor Prince Al-Walid bin Talal, who is also chairman and the largest single USB shareholder.

"Using a share exchange, USB would merge into Samba," with the new com-

pany taking on Samba's name. "There would be little change to the existing structure of Samba's board," the statement said.

Both bank managements have expressed a keen interest to join forces, although this would require approval from shareholders and the kingdom's regulatory bodies.

Both banks see significant value in such a merger.

especially given the outlook for slower growth in the region," Kingdom Holding Co. said.

The Gulf economies, heavily dependent on oil sales, have seen their revenues eroded by months of plummeting crude prices.

USB was itself formed by a merger in September of United Saudi Commercial Bank and Saudi Cairo Bank.

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NBA owners unanimously approve new labour deal

Fan anger and apathy awaits NBA return

NEW YORK (AFP) — Forgive Lamont Harvey, Dan Heraty and Fred Spicer if they do not greet news of the National Basketball Association labour settlement with joy.

They are among the millions of fans and workers who were hurt by the shutdown of the sport, which was solved here Thursday when owners voted unanimously to approve a deal with the players union.

Harvey, a 19-year-old ice cream vendor at Los Angeles Clippers games, lost \$2,000 to \$3,000 due to games being wiped out.

"Players complain about money and they make thousands of dollars a game. People like me have to hustle to make \$80 a game," he said. "Seems not having them is more of a letdown for us."

The sums might not rival those of the NBA stars, but the percentage of his income lost is greater than those of owners and players.

"This whole thing just shows how money hungry everyone is," said the high school student, who like his friends have lost their passion for the NBA and would not have minded a full-season shutdown.

"It really would not have mattered. People lost a love for the game," Harvey said. "They got a chance to see everybody just wanted the money. I don't think they realize they hurt a lot of people with this."

At least one, free agent Jayson Williams, does. He apologized.

"I'm sorry it ever came to this," Williams said. "I'm sorry for the fans, the people who sell the hot dogs and scorecards, — all of them. Maybe we can make some concessions and try to help these people out."

Spicer, a cafe owner near the Washington Wizards' home arena, lost big money



NBA Players Association President Patrick Ewing speaks with the media as he leaves the GM building in New York City. The NBA and the Players Association reached a settlement in their labour dispute earlier in the day and the NBA will begin playing a shortened schedule in early February (AFP photo)

with every missed game and doubts many people will come now.

"I don't know how many folks are coming back," he said. "If Wizards crowds are going to be (small), it isn't going to mean a lot. I'm not expecting a windfall."

Heraty had owned Chicago Bulls' season tickets for 12 years, but he has become fed up with six months of bickering and is not looking forward to a shortened season with over-worked players.

"I just don't care anymore," Heraty said. "I would have rather forgotten about it and moved on next year. It'll be a nightmare. Guys are 'out' of shape. The game will be sloppy. We're paying a lot of money for a product that won't be very good."

Art Taylor, a sports psychologist at Northeastern University in Boston, has

seen the apathy grow.

"There's massive apathy toward the NBA lockout. Fans put on an 'I don't care' attitude," Taylor said. "I never saw anything like this in the other sports' labor disputes."

Others are waiting to see whether or not Michael Jordan retires before deciding whether or not to care.

"I'm reserving my reaction until I know what Michael is doing," attorney Dan Hill said. "I won't be overjoyed or anything else until I know how the Bulls will be shaping up as a team."

"It's all Jordan for me," added Chris Kelsch. "These kind of athletes don't come along too often. But I won't watch after Jordan is gone."

Ryan Schimman, a sports marketing executive, expects players lost \$250 million in endorsements. "And that's conservative. Let's see how quick Nike

and Puma fill their stables again. It's going to be tough the next few years."

The NBA drew 20.4 million fans last season and spent \$2.6 billion in souvenirs for 1997, the last full-year with totals.

But former NBA executive Dave Gavitt listened to fans on a radio call-in show and was worried those figures will plunge in 1999.

"Fans seemed almost disappointed (the NBA would play)," he said. "It belies a deeper problem that some of us have felt was there for some time. There have been warning signs."

Just ask Portland Trail Blazers marketing director Harry Hunt.

"Maybe we got a little complacent when the NBA became the 'in' sport in America," he said. "The good thing is every single person in the NBA realises this disconnect with the fans."

Arazi outplays erratic Kafelnikov

DOHA (AFP) — Morocco's Hicham Arazi notched up a major surprise at the \$1 million ATP event here Thursday when he surged back to beat Russia's former French Open champion Yevgeny Kafelnikov 3-6, 6-1, 7-6 (12/10) in a second-round clash.

The 25-year-old left-handed Arazi now plays compatriot Karim Alami who finally saw off Argentina's Franco Squillari 6-2, 6-7 (2/7), 7-5 after a two-hour marathon.

Alami put out Czech Petr Korda in the first round. "This win will inspire me for the rest of the tournament," said a visibly weary Arazi after his clinching his win over the Russian — the fifth seeded player to be beaten in the event.

"I am very serious about my tennis this year," said Arazi who also said that if he stayed fit he felt he could break into the top-ten in the rankings.

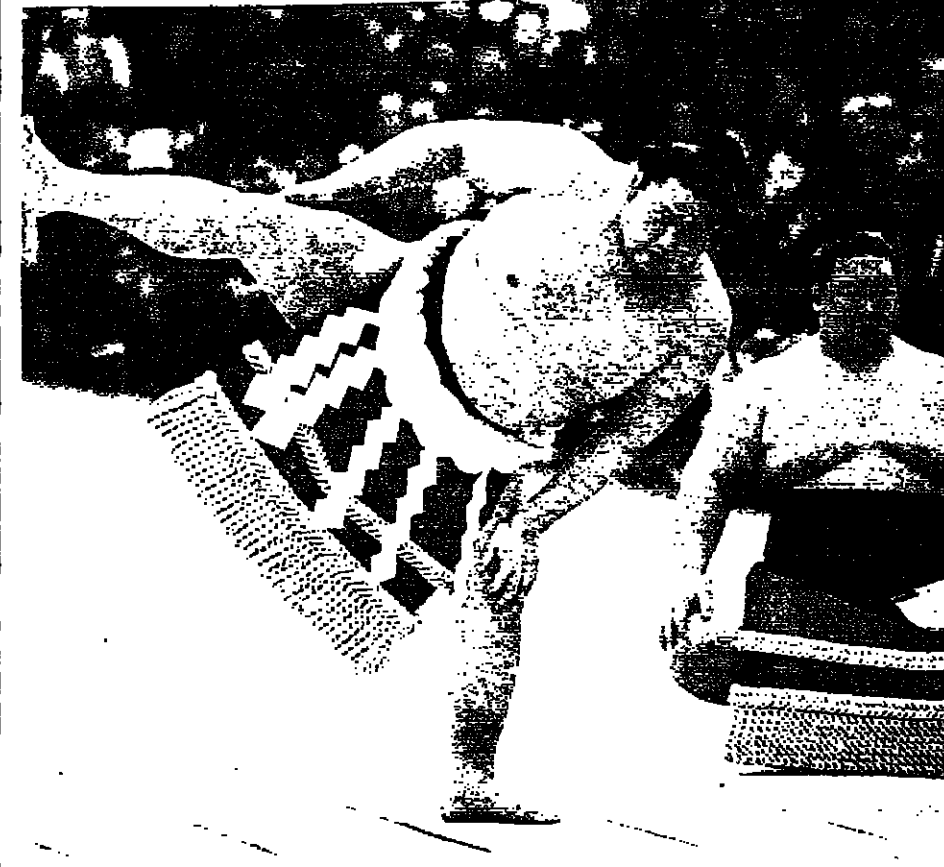
The loss was a big blow to Kafelnikov who was playing his first event since hiring a new coach — American Larry Stefanki, whose former pupils have included John McEnroe and Marcelo Rios.

And it was made worse when he failed to convert four match points in a dramatic 22-point third set tie-break.

Other seeds who have fallen in the opening two rounds are Britain's Greg Rusedski, Sweden's Thomas Johansson and Jan Siemerink of the Netherlands.

Seventh-seed Cedric Pioline did not make any mistakes. He beat experienced Spaniard Javier Sanchez 7-6 (7/5), 6-2 in 86 minutes and now plays Argentina's Mariano Zabaleta who put out Germany's Bernd Karbacher 6-0, 3-6, 7-5, for a place in the semi-finals.

Also lining up for the quarter-finals will be top-seeded Tim Henman of Britain and big-serving Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia. Henman faces American Jeff Tarango while Ivanisevic plays German qualifier Rainer Schuetler.



Yokozuna Takanohana (L), a Japanese Grand Champion sumo wrestler, demonstrates a ceremonial 'stumping', attended by his guardian Akinoshima (R) during the annual New Year's prayer by the Japan Sumo Association at Meiji Shrine in Tokyo (AFP photo)

Van Roost to play Halard-Decugis in Auckland final

AUCKLAND (AFP) —

Defending champion Dominique van Roost of Belgium will play third seed Julie Halard-Decugis in the final of the Auckland women's tournament on Saturday.

Van Roost, the top seed and World No. 12, overcame a scary start against fourth seeded Austrian Barbara Schett, to win 3-6, 6-1, 6-0 in 72 minutes.

France's Halard-Decugis avenged her quarter-final loss last year to Italian Silvia Farina, the second seed, with a straight sets 7-6 (7/5) 6-1 win.

Halard-Decugis finished 1998 with a ranking of 22, just three places behind Farina who looked tired after her marathon three-set battle with American Chanda Rubin in the quarter-finals.

Van Roost and Halard-Decugis have only met once before, at last year's U.S. Open where the Belgian won the first-

round match 6-2, 6-2.

Schett held serve twice while Van Roost just once in the first set.

But once Van Roost started to move off the baseline and come to the net, she looked a different player, moving up a level.

In the second set she broke Schett in the fourth and sixth games and in the last broke her in the first, third and fifth games to sweep into her second consecutive final at Auckland.

"In the first set Barbara played unbelievably well, she put a lot of pressure on me and I wasn't using the ball as well as I could," van Roost said.

"But in the second set I used my experience to get better and better and she started missing a few shots; then she got tired."

Halard-Decugis looked to be in trouble when Farina raced away to be 3-0 up in the first set.

But backed by a strong local crowd, Halard-

Decugis — who had an

easy ride into the last four after quarterfinal opponent Maria Sanchez Lorenzo

withdrew with a groin strain — found her touch to get the score back to 4.

The set went to tiebreak with Halard-Decugis closing out in tight finish before romping away with the second set.

Halard-Decugis said initially her only thought were to hang in when Farina got off to a flyer.

"I was just trying to my serve and play point because she was playing unbelievably well," Halard-Decugis said.

"I gained revenge Silvia today and I know tomorrow will be very tough," she said.

Bulls begin quest to woo back Jordan

NEW YORK (AFP) — While National Basketball Association (NBA) players began preparing for a shortened season, the three-time reigning champion Chicago Bulls began making moves to try and lure Michael Jordan back.

Players, fans, agents and owners hang awaiting Jordan's announcement, realizing the \$1 billion economic impact he has had from endorsements as well as what he has meant to the game worldwide.

"This guy has opened a lot of doors for us," Washington guard Mitch Richmond adding. "He is Jesus in tennis shoes."

Jordan has sparked the Bulls to six NBA crown in eight years but said he would consider retiring and decide after the labour dispute with owners was settled, as it was here Thursday when owners approved a new deal.

"Michael needs to see what the rules of the new agreement are like so he can see what the big picture looks like," said David Falk, Jordan's agent. Jordan's top salary this season would be \$34.9 million.

The Bulls contacted Phil Jackson about returning as coach but he turned down the idea. Jackson departed saying he wanted a break and Tim Floyd was hired from the college ranks as a replacement if Jackson did not return.

The Bulls need to know Jordan's decision so they can decide how to bid during what promises to be a whirlwind free agency signing period. The Bulls have eight spots to fill when the signing period opens January 18.

"We would like to go back to talking about Michael first," Floyd said.

"We're hoping that Michael will come (back) and if that does happen, which is best-case scenario, then we can really try to put a team together that can try to contend for a seventh championship."

Jordan, however, has said he wants to see some signs the Bulls intend to spend money to stay contenders, not start a rebuilding period with Floyd. That means he wants to see Chicago re-sign his pal Scottie Pippen.

Pippen, 33, reportedly wants a four-year deal from the Bulls at the new veterans cap of \$14 million, which would likely average out to \$17.5 million a season with raises through 2002.

Whether or not the Bulls risk that sum on a player coming off back surgery could be the critical factor in bringing back Jordan, who would likely only sign a one-year deal and then might retire, leaving the Bulls committed to Pippen.

Loyalty has been a strong factor between Jordan, Pippen and Jackson and Pippen has long felt abused by Bulls management, specifically general manager Jerry Krause, who has also earned Jordan's enmity.

Jordan's fate has become the hot topic for the Bulls' free agents, including his friend Ron Harper, who joked, "Hopefully, he'll announce what that decision is soon so you all can leave me alone."

"Michael is in the Bahamas having a nice time. I'm not going to speculate what he's going to do. He's a teammate and a close friend and I want him to be happy. I'm not going to put odds on what he'll do. He'll choose whatever

er's best for his life.

"Michael is the only one who knows what he is going to do," said guard Steve Kerr.

"We're all waiting for an answer. Who knows if Michael will be there? At this point I have no idea."

Bulls' Canadian backup center Bill Wennington sees little hope Jordan will return because he has everything to lose and nothing to gain in an abbreviated season caused by the labour feud.

"That's why I get the feeling that he's not coming back," he said. "I'm not very positive about him coming back. He was tired at the end of last season and hinting then that he wouldn't come back."

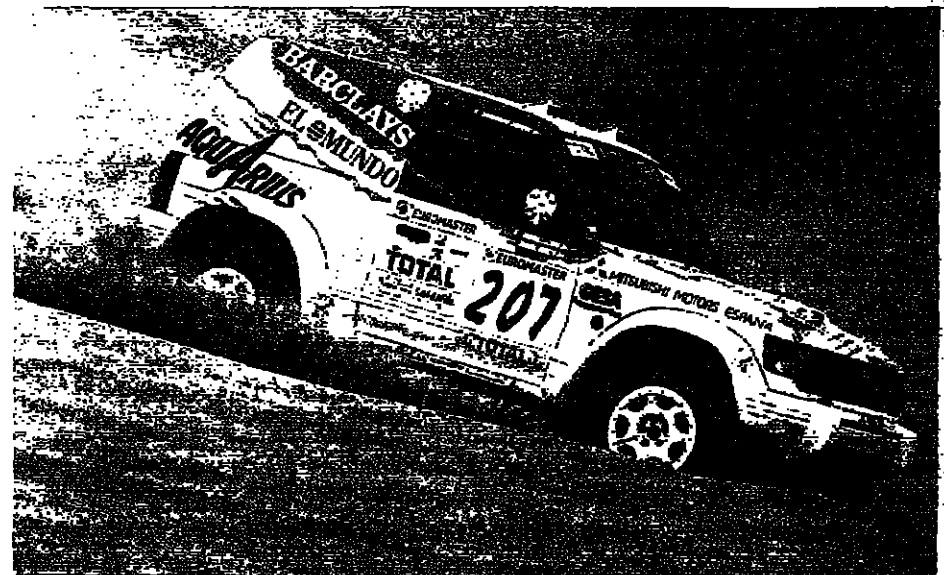
Fans and league officials hope Jordan returns. But NBA Commissioner David Stern refuses to say the fate of the league rests on Jordan any more than it once might have on Larry Bird or Magic Johnson.

"One of these days Michael Jordan is going to retire. It's sad but inevitable," Stern said. "The reason he is acknowledged to be the greatest player in the world is he gets the chance to prove it every day against the best players in the world."

"Other players are anxious to get onto that stage ... to prove to you they will take the league to the levels it can reach."

Until Jordan brings down his own curtain, such acts are clearly back-stage.

The Spanish team of Miguel Prietand Dominique Serieys in a Mitsubishi rolls down a dune during the special stage between Tidjikja (Mauritania) and Niore (Mali), in the Grenada-Dakar Rally. Prieto won the stage and takes third place in the overall classification (AFP photo)



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THE GAME		THE JACKAL		SAEEDI AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY		FIRE DOWN BELOW		Ahmad Zaki & Layla Elwi .. in		Dustin Hoffman & John Travolta .. in	
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'Israel marketing 3,700 new settlement units'

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel's housing ministry will sell lots for the construction of another 3,729 settlement units in the West Bank this year, the Haaretz newspaper reported on Friday.

Citing a confidential ministry document, the newspaper said a further 1,320 lots would also be marketed at the Arab east Jerusalem area of Abu Ghneim. The tenders to be issued for West Bank settlements include 500 units in Ariel, a large Jewish community deep inside the north of the occupied territory, and 400 units in the nearby ultra-Orthodox enclave of Ennetamuel.

Most of the rest of the housing sites will be put up for sale in settlements located around Jerusalem and nearby Bethlehem, Haaretz said. No precise timetable for the property sales was given. The spokesman for the housing ministry was unavailable for comment on the report Friday.

The rightist government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has refused international appeals to halt building in the Jewish settlements pending the outcome of negotiations with the Palestinians on the

Settlers block Gaza road

GUSH KATIF (AFP) — Israeli settlers blocked a road near their enclave in the Gaza Strip on Friday to protest an army decision to let Palestinians use the route, military sources said. The settlers defied soldiers' orders to disperse and refused to budge even after the army declared the area a "closed military zone," its normal tactic for moving Israelis away from confrontations in the occupied territories. The Israeli militants, who occupy a bloc of settlements near the coast in the southern Gaza Strip, were furious with the army's decision early this week to allow Palestinians to use a main coastal road that had been closed to them since a terrorist attack in the area several years ago.

The road, which runs alongside the Gush Katif bloc of settlements, is the shortest route between Gaza City and major Palestinian towns at the southern end of the Gaza Strip.

future of the occupied territories.

The Palestinian National Authority charges that the ongoing settlement construction is designed to prejudice the negotiations by strengthening Israel's hold on large areas of the West Bank and east Jerusalem, where Palestinians hope to establish the capital of a future state.

The U.S. has particularly complained about Israel's decision to go ahead with construction of a settlement at Jabel Abu Ghneim.

The launch of the project in March 1997 led to a 20-month

breakdown in Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts, although the government held off issuing tenders for actual housing construction at the site until last October.

The figures published by Haaretz included only tenders for construction of publicly funded housing. Thousands of privately funded units are also planned or already under construction according to private groups which monitor settlement activities. There are currently 144 Jewish settlements in the West Bank with more than 155,000 residents.



Palestinian women perform Friday prayers at Jerusalem's Al Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third holiest shrine. More than 300,000 people performed the prayers (Reuters photo)

300,000 attend Friday prayers at Al Aqsa

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Amid tight Israeli security, 300,000 Muslims attended weekly prayers at Al Aqsa Mosque in Arab east Jerusalem's Old City on Friday, Israeli police said.

Israeli police deployed a large number of extra men around the mosque compound and on access roads but no incidents were reported as worshippers flocked in from Arab east Jerusalem and elsewhere in the occupied West Bank.

Huge numbers of worshippers have been attending the Friday prayers during the Muslim Holy Month of Ramadan, which began on Dec. 19 in the Palestinian

areas. Attendance at the service is expected to peak next week for the last Friday prayers of the fasting month.

The Al Aqsa compound, which includes the mosque and the Dome of the Rock shrine which Muslim tradition says commemorates the spot where the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven, is the third holiest site in Islam after Medina and Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

Palestinian youth wounded in Hebron

Meanwhile in Hebron Israeli soldiers firing rub-

ber-coated steel bullets wounded a Palestinian youth on Friday in sporadic clashes in the tense West Bank town, witnesses said.

The Israeli soldiers fired the rubber-coated bullets and stun grenades after some 20 youths started pelting them with stones on the border of the Palestinian- and Israeli-controlled parts of the town, the witnesses said.

Local residents are angry over a five-day-old curfew imposed on Palestinians living in the Israeli sector of the city since unidentified gunmen opened fire on an Israeli car, wounding two

women, on Monday. The Israeli army has also barred Palestinians from entering or leaving the self-rule sector of the city of 140,000 since the shooting.

Tensions rose further Wednesday when Israeli troops shot and killed a Palestinian man who approached them while carrying a toy gun.

Israel handed over four-fifths of Hebron in January 1997 to the Palestinian National Authority. But the Jewish state remains in control of the remaining fifth of the town where 400 Jewish settlers live.

NEWS IN BRIEF

S. Arabia to give light weapons to Lebanon

RIYADH (AP) — Saudi Arabia is to give Lebanon small arms and armoured cars in a gesture of friendship, a Saudi military official said Friday. The decision was made by Defence Minister Prince Sultan, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "The gift includes light weapons, such as machineguns, pistols and hand grenades ... in addition to some armoured vehicles and armoured personnel carriers," the official said. He added the weapons were produced by Saudi factories in Al Kharij, 70 kilometres southwest of the capital, Riyadh. The official did not give the value of the arms and vehicles.

Jose most popular name in some U.S. states

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Moms like Mike in most of the United States, but Jose leads the way in California and Texas. In 1998, the name Jose showed up on more birth certificates than any other boy's name in those two heavily Hispanic states, according to the Social Security Administration. Michael was No. 1 nationwide. Jose's popularity isn't just the result of growing Hispanic populations, said Edward Callary, editor of the *American Name Society's* journal. It also reflects a new comfort with ethnicity. "Thirty years ago, most people would not have given their child an ethnic name," Callary said. "A lot of folks tried to blend in and fold into American society." Though Jose led the list for boys in California, the rest of the state's top five were more traditional. In descending order: Daniel, Michael, Anthony and Jacob. The girls' list lacked a Latina flavour, even in California. The top five: Jessica, Ashley, Emily, Jennifer and Samantha.

Teen killed in car accident with twin brother

COLD SPRING, Minnesota (AP) — A teen-age girl was killed when the car she was driving collided head-on with a car driven by her twin brother. The crash happened on a slippery road a kilometre from the twins' home on Thursday afternoon. Jacqueline Kern, 17, died. Her twin, Jesse, was in fair condition Friday. His 15-year-old brother suffered minor injuries.

Kuwait denies torture of Iranian workers

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Kuwait has denied a report from Tehran that a group of Iranian workers were tortured by police in the Gulf Arab emirate before being deported. Kuwaiti prisons and deportation centres are "in excellent condition" as documented by Amnesty International, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, the interior ministry insisted late Thursday. Most of the group of 26 Iranian workers were deported for violating residency rules, said spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Ahmad Al Sharqawi. The deportation was carried out in cooperation with their embassy.

UNHCR denies Iran forcing refugees out

TEHRAN (AP) — The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees denied Friday reports that Iran was forcing thousands of Afghans to return to their embattled homeland. It said more than 11,000 Afghans had voluntarily left Iran which is home to about 1.5 million refugees from Afghanistan. "There has been no forced repatriation of Afghan refugees by Iran," the UNHCR office in Iran said in a statement.

Women attack suspected paedophile

BRUSSELS (AFP) — A 63-year-old suspected paedophile was hospitalised after being attacked by the mothers of his alleged victims at the main courthouse in the northern town of Antwerp on Friday, judicial sources said. The six women rained blows on the man in front of a police officer with nobody at the scene intervening. The suspect — a 63-year-old Dutchman charged with sexually abusing several young children — was taken to hospital. His condition was not immediately known. The mothers told the Belga news agency that they did not regret their actions, even though they face the possibility of criminal charges against them.

Sexual assaults rampant in Canada's military

OTTAWA (R) — Sexual assaults on women within Canada's armed forces were reported almost daily last year — double the number of such assaults reported a year earlier, according to government figures released on Friday. Canada's military has been plagued by scandals in recent months, including accusations from women that they constantly face sexual harassment and abuse while serving in various branches of the armed forces. Canadian officials contended it was possible that the number of incidents had not actually increased, but that many more cases were being reported after Defence Minister Art Eggleton and Chief of Defence Staff Maurice Baril appealed to victims of abuse and harassment to come forward.

Britain pressures Yemen for access to detainees

LONDON (R) — Britain said on Friday it was maintaining pressure on Yemen for access to six Britons detained in Aden who are reported to be facing trial on charges of sabotage.

The Yemeni embassy in London responded by saying the men could be visited at any time and attacked the British media for its criticism of a bloody hostage rescue last week in which four Western tourists died. The Foreign Office said it had not been informed of any charges against the six men, which the embassy said were planning to carry out terrorist acts.

"So far the Yemeni authorities have not come to us with any evidence to substantiate what (Yemen's Interior Minister) Hussein Muhammad Arab is reported to have said. We are still pressuring the Yemeni authorities," a Foreign Office spokesman said. He added that he had no information on reports from the detainees' relatives that two of the men had been shot.

The relatives said they had been told the men would be tried on Saturday on charges of sabotage and faced the death penalty if found guilty.

One of the detainees' wives, Monica Davies, told a news conference her husband was not a terrorist. "My husband is a family man, a quiet man. It was a family holiday which we had planned. He was supposed to phone me and we were going to arrange when I would come over but the phone calls stopped after four days. These allegations are just ludicrous," she said.

House to begin debating fiscal budget

(Continued from page 1)

"There needs to be a comprehensive programme planned and implemented in close coordination between the government, Parliament and the private sector," he said, echoing one of the recommendations made in the committee's report calling for a national economic programme.

The budget, described as "austere" by the committee, earmarked JD32 million to finance extra infrastructure for a social safety net package to fight rising urban and rural poverty and for water projects to help ease chronic shortages. The budget also includes allocations for the Ministry of Social Development to deal with poverty and unemployment through the National Aid Fund and the Employment and

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Ehud Barak, the leader of Israel's opposition Labour Party, secretly urged a major military strike against Syria when he was a senior general on the eve of Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, the Haaretz newspaper reported Friday.

Barak, who was head of the army's planning branch at the time, tried to convince then defence minister Ariel Sharon to shift the focus of the war from Lebanon, where Palestinian guerrillas had bases, to Syria, Haaretz said.

Barak argued that Sharon's plans to invade Lebanon would in any case provoke clashes with Syria and that it would be better to expand the

offensive from the beginning into a "massive operation" against the Syrian army.

The general, then only 40, said the Syrian army could be devastated by a "very deep flanking thrust" launched from the Golan Heights, which Israel occupied in 1967, into Syria and then the Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley in eastern Lebanon, Haaretz reported.

The newspaper, which said only that it discovered Barak's plans "by chance," said the young general wanted to keep his project secret from most of the government, then headed by rightist Menachem Begin, and even the army hierarchy.

Senate approves trial plan

(Continued from page 1)

"This puts off a major confrontation," said New York Democratic Sen. Charles Schumer. "We've basically agreed to start the process going and see if there can be some kind of agreement on witnesses later."

Senators said a four-member bipartisan group would make sure there were safeguards and guidelines on calling witnesses and handling potentially salacious testimony.

The vote on the accord was delayed for a few hours as negotiators tried to nail down the details, with a dispute arising over whether new evi-

dence not included in the House impeachment report could be introduced at trial.

But senators said the opening presentations would have to be based on the record developed by the House inquiry. The introduction of any new evidence later in the trial would require a majority vote.

"There will be no surprise evidence," Republican Sen. Olympia Snowe of Maine said.

House Judiciary Chairman Henry Hyde, who will lead the prosecution, said on Friday witnesses were crucial to the case but added that he appreciated the bipartisan agreement.

House to begin debating fiscal budget

(Continued from page 1)

Development Fund — organisations mired in controversy over charges of nepotism and corruption.

The parliamentary committee recommendations, including cancelling customs and sales tax on Jordanian-made buses and trucks, increasing Central Bank reserves from foreign sources and lowering high interest rates, are suggestions, analysts say, the government, eager to increase revenues, reduce its foreign debt and protect the dinar's value, simply cannot afford to do.

"Most of the committee's recommendations run counter to government policy," he said. "They are not proposing anything practical, only general recommendations that are not doable," said an economist.

With an estimated three per cent growth, the government

will have very little room to manoeuvre when it comes to spending in order to generate growth in the economy unless it wants to jeopardise IMF-set targets, which Jordan can ill-afford to miss this time.

According to economists, Jordan needs six per cent economic growth to barely cope with a population growing at three per cent annually.

But economists acknowledge that while the economic slowdown will continue well into the first half of this year, they say that without privatising state assets — the most obvious source of new revenue which can be used to stimulate growth — the "pain" will be that much greater.

The budget, which analysts describe as anywhere from an "ordinary to a hardship budget," is a difficult balancing act

for decision makers because of contradictory objectives.

"To encourage investment, the Central Bank has to lower interest rates, and to do that it has to increase its foreign reserves through borrowing, which would increase its debt burden... if it reduces the rate, it could pose a threat to the stability of the dinar," said an economist, citing an example of often contradictory policies and effects. "It is a vicious circle."

Jordan's foreign reserves declined to \$1,210 million by the end of November, compared to \$1.6 billion at the beginning of 1998, as result of a drop in both remittances and exports as well as capital flight, mainly a result of fears for His Majesty King Hussein's health. The King, who was undergoing cancer treatment

since July last year, arrived in London Wednesday to convalesce before returning to Jordan.

While the 1999 budget does not look much different than previous budgets, the government, has finally wiped the slate clean.

The government has paid all its debt to hospitals, local contractors and other debtors. Paying the local debt resulted in a 9.4 deficit for 1998.

"The government is in a difficult situation," said economist Fahed Fanek. "If we spend more to help spur economic growth, we will lose out on the gains made over the past six years, including stability of the dinar, low inflation... and if we spend less to reduce the deficit, we risk higher unemployment and a deeper recession," he said. "The government had to take the middle road and it did."

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Woman arrested for sleeping in star's home

LOS ANGELES (R) — She spent the night in Brad Pitt's bedroom, wearing his clothes. If only the Hollywood heart-throb had been there in the morning, instead of those six armed police officers. Athens Marie Rolando, 19, was arrested Thursday on charges of misdemeanor trespassing after a caretaker found her asleep in Pitt's home in the Hollywood Hills — wearing the actor's green sweatshirt, blue sweatpants, blue hat and tennis shoes, police said. Pitt, star of "Meet Joe Black," was not home at the time. Los Angeles police spokesman Anthony Alba said Rolando allegedly climbed into Pitt's house through an open window shortly after midnight Thursday and put on his clothes because she was cold. She was arrested mid-morning.

Crisis line for men in demand after ad

WELLINGTON (R) — A disturbing television advertisement for a New Zealand helpline service has spurred men to face their problems and seek help from members of their own sex, a counselling service director said Friday. Auckland-based charity *Lifeline and Interchurch Counselling* Service launched a national television campaign on Dec. 26 to promote one of its services, Mensline, a crisis line for men by men it has been running since 1996. The advert, *Lifeline's* first, depicts a world as viewed by a troubled male who sees his job as hell, home as a prison, strong drinks at a bar as lunch and, shockingly, himself as a punching bag for his wife.

Mentally ill no more violent than others

WASHINGTON (R) — People with mental illness are no more likely than the general population to be violent, the president of the American Psychiatric Association said on Thursday. Dr. Rodrigo Munoz said in a statement released by the group that an incident in which a man believed to be mentally ill pushed a woman off a New York subway platform to her death was tragic, but in no way proves that the mentally ill are especially dangerous. "The conditions likely to increase the risk of violence are the same whether a person has mental illness or not," Munoz said. "The risk of violence for people with mental illnesses is most associated with alcohol abuse — just as it is in the rest of the population."

Mythical Tibet waterfall discovered

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Explorers have discovered a mythical 35-metre high waterfall in the Himalayan mountains of Tibet, the National Geographic Society said on Thursday. The waterfall, which the explorers named "The Hidden Falls," is in a previously unexplored five-mile gap in the Upper Tsangpo Gorge, the world's deepest canyon arching across the easternmost Himalayas. Explorers have been looking for the famous falls since the 19th century. "It's very exciting to find the waterfall of myth to be real," expedition leader Ian Baker said in a statement. "People assumed the story of a great falls on the Tsangpo was just a romance. But it's here, and larger than we ever imagined," he said.

Minister fathered son at age of 17

BRITAIN (R) — British Labour MP Gordon Brown acknowledged on Friday that he had fathered a son when he was 17 years old. Brown, 42, said he had never made a secret of the relationship and that he had made a piece of cake of leaving his son a place in his life. He said he was 17 when he met his 15-year-old girlfriend, who was pregnant. "I was a young man, but I was a responsible young man," he said. "I was a young man, but I was a responsible young man."

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Former Mossad chief joins Labour leader's campaign

Three Iraqis seeking political asylum in the Philippines

U.S. deports record number of illegals

Man denied for two alleged forced marriage case

Minister fathered son at age of 17